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The Mastering of Mexico

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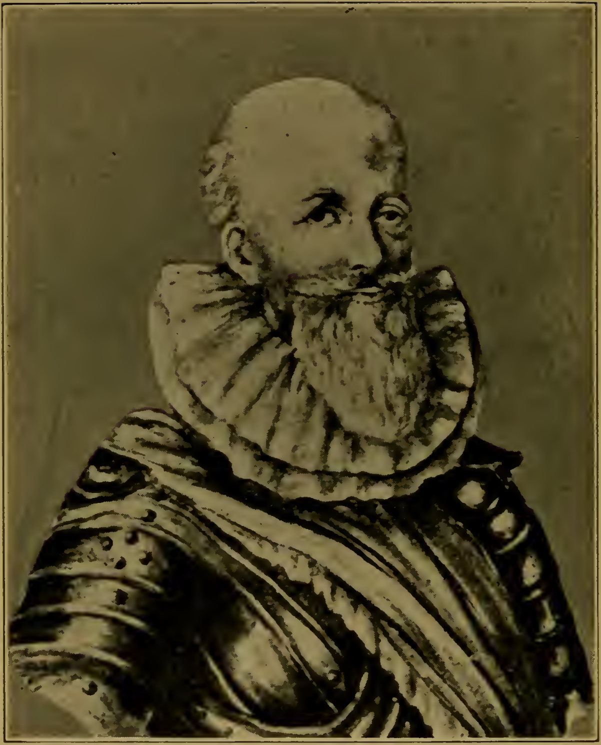

Bernal Diaz del Castillo, upon whose eye-witness accounts in his "Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva-España," or "True History of the Conquest of New Spain," this book is in great measure founded. He was born in Spain in the year 1492, and died in Guatemala about 1581.

The
Mastering of Mexico

Told after one of the Conquistadores
and various of his Interpreters

By
Kate Stephens

Author of "The Greek Spirit," "Workfellows
in Social Progression," etc.

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You, sirs, tell the truth when you say that even the most renowned generals of Rome have not done such great deeds as ours. Histories telling of these events will say, God willing, greater things of us than of what has happened before; and that we were in worshipful service to God and our country, and were guided by true justice and Christian feeling.

— *Cortez addressing his comrades*
during the war in Tlaxcala.

Besides the great mercies which the Almighty granted us in all we did, it seems His blessing was upon the arm of us soldiers and the good counsel we gave Cortes — how to do all things in the right way.

— *Bernal Diaz del Castillo.*

FOREWORD

An incomparable picture-story told long ago how a few hundred Spaniards subdued a militarized country and its tens of thousands of warriors mustered against them. After going up from a sea-board to a capital city — this time to the splendid, Aztec city of Mexico — another Xenophon wrote another Anabasis. It is a wonderful tale, and no one can say why, before this book, it has not belonged, in part at least, to a public as avid as the American for straightforward stories of pluck, pertinacity, foresight and a final dazzling success.

Seventy years or so ago Prescott said the story was one of the two pillars on which history of the Conquest mainly rested. The fastidious scholar wondered at what the Conquistador called his own "plain and rude" tale, where "truth supplies the place of art and eloquence," and although he found Diaz' matchless narrative "vulgar" in several phases, he confessed it would be read and re-read by scholar and school-boy while compositions of phrase-polishers slept undisturbed on their shelves.

To us of to-day Bernal Diaz del Castillo is not "vulgar." Profounder sentiments strengthen our vision. To our thinking Diaz' work is that of a writer of notable stature — of a spirit as sincere as his body was enduring, who, fifty years after he had had no mean part in one of the greatest expeditions known to mankind, himself wrote with astounding vizualizing power of what he and his comrades did and suffered. His story is that of a man of ardent piety and of a sense of justice and endeavor after right, according to the standards of his generation, that add significance to every sentence — the chronicle of a veteran soldier of sturdy, single-hearted faith in himself and his comrades and his Captain Cortes, a human of simple tastes and a heart with a brotherhood for the cannibal Aztec.

Like certain other noteworthy writings the narrative of Bernal Diaz del Castillo had an unusual history. Before publication in its original Spanish the manuscript copy sent to Spain is said to have suffered the solicitude of a friar of the Order of Mercy, who garbled facts, suppressed parts, interpolated others, changed names and took privileges editors have unfortunately been known to take. This Padre Remón's version, first published in 1632, was the one various translators, as our earlier English, the French, German and others, used in turning the story into their mother tongues. Within the last quarter of a century, however, the True History — that of the old Conquistador himself, preserved in the archives of Guatemala where he finally settled after the Conquest — the True History has had the excellent fortune of an edition brought out in Mexico through the initiation, and under the direction, of Señor Don Genaro García; and of translation into English by the Honorable Professor of Archæology of the National Museum of Mexico and publication by The Hakluyt Society.

Besides Bernal Diaz of Castile scores of writers, such as Acosta, Cortes, Solis, Herrera, have prompted to this retelling of Diaz' tale of the great city's capture. And also such as "T. N." (Thomas Nicholas) and his black letter, "The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the Weast India now called New Spayne," "out of the Spanish" of Gomara, 1578; certain narrators in "Purchas, his Pilgrim"; Maurice Keatinge in his translation of "The True History of the Conquest of Mexico," 1800; and others; but chiefest, and originally affording the foundation of our narrative, John Graham Lockhart in his "Memoirs of the Conquistador, Bernal Diaz del Castillo," 1844. Without the sincere, admirable work of these Englishmen this book would not have been. But their age-scented, and sometimes cumbrous, volumes not infrequently stand idle in our libraries. This book is for everyday use, offered with full knowledge that the veteran Spaniard wished nothing taken from his work because all he said was true. To Bernal Diaz del Castillo, however, days and weeks were as hours to us. For to-day's reader, to save his precious and pleasing story, we have to elide certain parts.

In the past we have often been told that the Conquest of Mexico was a most glorious exploit, due wholly to an absolutist, a poser of quasi omniscient intellect and callous emotion, a leader driving subordinated soldiers. The following pages show, rather, a human Cortes — able, untiringly active in mind and body, gently intimate and comrade-like of heart, subtle in speech, but ardent, imaginative and ambitious enough to grasp opportunities and mould them to his own advantage. These pages prove, also, by constant reference to " our Captain " and his seeking and accepting counsel from his company of soldiers, that the Conquest was a democratic, community affair, each soldier of fortune present by his own choice and with vote and speech indicating his personal, independent wish in general matters; that the little band of self-respecting, adventurous Spaniards who set out to conquer the Aztec empire were self-reliant, " common soldiers," each of a dozen or so having money enough in pocket to buy himself that noble aider to the Conquest, a horse, but all seemingly served by a substantially founded education, and gifted with the ability to do their own thinking in practical affairs of life; that from these facts the expedition had its success.

To Mr. Alfred Percival Maudslay of Morney Cross, Hereford, England, for permission to quote from his beautiful translation, "The True History of the Conquest of New Spain by Bernal Diaz del Castillo," and to Mr. Thomas A. Joyce of the Department of Ethnography of the British Museum for his generously allowing full use of his "Mexican Archæology," our thanks are due.

New York, 1916.

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THE MASTERING OF MEXICO

CHAPTER I

How we discovered Yucatan

When we, who were at Nombre de Dios in the province of Tierra-firme,* learned that the island of Cuba had just been conquered, and Diego Velasquez appointed governor there, some of us gentlemen and soldiers, all persons of quality, met together and asked of Pedro Arias de Avila, governor of Tierra-firme, permission to go to Cuba. He readily gave us leave, since his son-in-law, Balboa, had so far subdued the people and successfully administered the colony that Avila himself found no employment for so many men as he had brought from Spain.

We forthwith embarked in a good ship and with fair weather landed in Cuba, where we went at once to pay our respects to the governor, Diego Velasquez. He received us kindly and promised us the first Indians available. For months we waited and idled with this promise in mind. But finally one hundred and ten of us, those who had come to Cuba together, and also others, sought to gain employment fitting for ourselves, and so we met and chose for our captain, Francisco Hernandez de Cordova, a rich man and one owning numbers of Indians in Cuba. He was to lead us on voyages of discovery.

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* Tierra-firme extended along the north coast of South America from Cape Vela westward to Darien, and northward to Cape Gracias-a-Dios in Honduras.

The spelling of names in this book, and statements of numbers, are for the most part taken from "The True History of the Conquest of New Spain by Bernal Diaz del Castillo," translated into English by Alfred Percival Maudslay.

To this purpose we bought two ships of good size. The third was a bark, a gift of Diego Velasquez — if we would go to the Guanajes Islands off the coast of Honduras, make war on the people there, and bring him three cargoes of Indians to pay him for his bark. We knew, however, that what Diego Velasquez asked of us was an act of injustice, and gave answer that neither the law of God nor of the king bid us to turn free people into slaves. When he learned our will, he confessed that our plan to go for the discovery of new countries was more praiseworthy, and he helped us find provision for the voyage.

We now had three ships and a supply of bread, called cassava, made from the yucca root. We also bought some pigs, which cost us three dollars apiece; for at that time there were neither cows nor sheep in Cuba. Then we had also a scant supply of other provisions, while every soldier took some green glass beads for bartering. We hired three pilots and some sailors, and supplied ourselves, all at our own cost and risk, with ropes and anchors, casks for water, and other needs.

That we might not want for anything right and useful, by fair words and promises we persuaded a priest to join us, and also a treasurer appointed in the name of the king, so that, if we should discover new lands where gold, silver, and pearls were to be had, there might be among us a person to take charge of our king's fifth.*

After we had met together, the one hundred and ten of us, and when everything had been properly ordered, we commended ourselves to God, and set out on our voyage from a harbor on the north coast of Cuba, on the 8th day of February, in the year 1517.†

For a twelve days' sail we hovered near the coast, but afterwards we doubled Cape San Antonio and made for the open sea, steering toward the setting sun, wholly ignorant of the depth and currents of the water. We knew nothing, moreover, of what winds might prevail, until a terrible storm came down upon us and blew two days and nights. The sea lashed us boisterously, and every moment we expected shipwreck. But finally the wind ceased, and twenty-one days after we had left harbor in Cuba we came in sight of land. Every heart, filled with gratitude towards God, rejoiced greatly.

---

* The young grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, Charles, was now king of Spain. In the many and significant years in which he served, he was known as Don Carlos I of Spain, and Emperor Carlos V.

† At the opening of our story the energy of Europe had already sought out the coast of America from the bay of Honduras to the

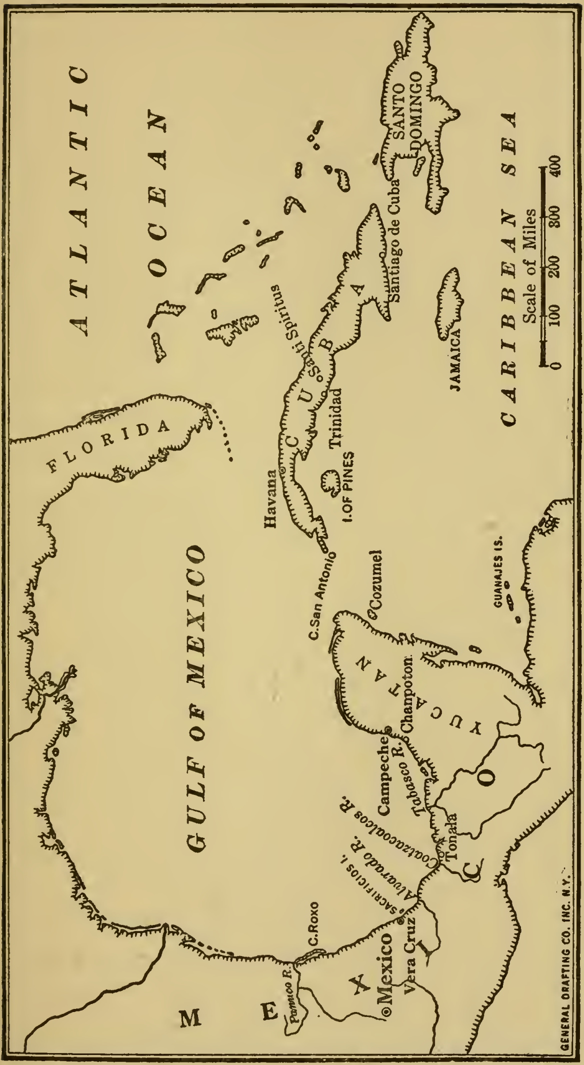
It was a new country to us, no report of it had ever reached our ears, and the morning of the 5th of March Indians came toward us in ten large canoes as swift as their paddles and sails could bring them. Many of the canoes, large enough to hold forty or fifty Indians, were hollowed out of the trunks of trees like our kneading troughs.

As the canoes approached we made signs of friendship to the Indians, beckoning them to come on with our hands and waving our cloaks; for no one among us could speak the language of Yucatan. Without showing the least fear they did paddle alongside, and more than thirty clambered aboard our main ship. They were dressed in cotton jackets, or cuirasses, and small aprons which hung from their hips half

Rio de la Plata. Sebastian Cabot had followed the northern coast from Labrador to Florida. Balboa had

> "with eagle eyes
> Stared at the Pacific — and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise —
> Silent upon a peak in Darien."

Spaniards had formed settlements in Cuba. But the circuitous, sweeping Gulf of Mexico had successfully withdrawn its riches. How they were soon to be bared by these adventurous men, this book tells.


ATLANTIC
OCEAN
FLORIDA
GULF OF MEXICO
CUBA
Havana
Santi Spiritus
Trinidad
Santiago de Cuba
I. OF PINES
C. San Antonio
SANTO DOMINGO
JAMAICA
CARIBBEAN SEA
Scale of Miles
0
100
200
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Cozumel
GUANAJES IS.
YUCATAN
Champoton
Campeche
Tabasco R.
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Mexico
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MEXICO
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The three expeditions of the Spaniards visited southern coasts of the Gulf of Mexico.

way down to their knees. To each we gave a string of green glass beads, and also bacon and cassava bread to eat, and after they had minutely examined our vessel the chief told us by signs that he would now return to his canoe, but would bring more canoes the next day and take us ashore.

Early next day twelve canoes did come to us. By every suggestion of friendliness the chief signified to our captain that we should go ashore, and should come to his town, where he would give us plenty of whatever we wanted to eat. The town, we could see, was a sizable place about six miles inland, and when our captain consulted us about this friendly invitation, we resolved to lower our boats, take with us our smallest ship, and so proceed in company with the twelve canoes.

In this manner we came safely to shore, but when the cacique saw us landed, and showing no intention of going to his town, he again signed to our captain for us to follow him, making at the same time demonstrations of good-will. A second time we consulted whether we should follow or not, and most of us were of the opinion that we should, but should take every precaution.

In close order, with our arms ready for action, we began our march, the cacique coming on with crowds of Indians who had trooped down to the shore. But suddenly the chief raised his voice and called out. No sooner had he signaled than bands of warriors rushed with terrible fury from ambush, and after letting fly a shower of arrows, attacked us man for man. They felt the sharp edge of our swords, however, and saw what destruction our cross-bows and matchlocks made, and they speedily gave way, but not before fifteen lay dead on the field. Their weapons were lances, bows and arrows, shields and slings, and they were clad in cuirasses of padded cotton. Each had a tuft of feathers on his head.

A little distance ahead of the place of their onset stood three stone houses, in which we found clay idols, rather large and of horrible shape, some with demons' faces, and others with women's. We also found small idols in wooden chests, and necklaces and trinkets in the form of fish and ducks worked out in gold of low grade. When we saw all this gold, and the temples of masonry, we were overjoyed that we had come upon so rich a country.

After the combat was over, and our priest had carried the chests and small idols and gold to our ships, we dressed the wounds of our men and again set sail. Two of the natives we took prisoners and carried with us, and later they became Christians and were baptized with the names Melchior and Julian.

Continuing our course westward, we met many promontories, reefs and shallows, and therefore proceeded with caution, sailing only by day and lying to at night. After fourteen days we came upon another town the Indians call Campeche, and here there seemed to us to be an inner harbor fed by some stream from which we might take fresh water. Of water we stood in need. Our fleet had been manned by poor men, who had not money enough to buy watertight casks, and our supply of water was fast lessening.

When we had now brought our casks on shore, and had filled them, and were about to go back in our small boats, fifty Indians, or so, came up to us. They wore good mantles of cotton cloth, and asked us by friendly signs what our business was. We told them to take on water and then to embark. They signified that we should go with them to their town.

About accepting their invitation we held a consultation, but at length we all agreed to go and to keep well on the watch during our visit. They took us to some buildings of stone and lime, large and well put together, like those we had seen a fortnight before. When we had entered we saw they were temples, and that figures of serpents and evil-looking gods covered the walls; and that some of the idols bore symbols like crosses. At all this — the temples of good appearance, the crosses — we were greatly astonished. But we also saw spots of fresh blood about an altar, and it seemed as though they had just been sacrificing to their gods, perhaps to gain power to overcome us.

Many Indian women now came up to us with smiles, and while we were looking on, other natives clad in tattered cloaks approached, each carrying dried reeds, which they laid upon the ground. Behind them were troops of men, also in cotton armor, and bearing bows, shields, slings and stones.

At this moment there came running from another temple ten Indians, all dressed in long, white robes, the long hair of their heads so matted with blood that it could neither be combed nor put in order without cutting. These ten were priests, and in that country are called papas — I repeat it, they are in that country called papas. These papas carried clay pans filled with glowing coals and a substance that looked like resin, and they term copal. With this burning resin they began to incense us, and they signed that we should leave their country before the reeds, about to be lighted, should be consumed; otherwise they would attack us and kill us, every man.

After we had understood this determination of theirs, the papas ordered the reeds to be fired, and as soon as the wood began to burn they were silent. Those who had formed in line of battle, however, now set up a blowing of their pipes and twisted shells and beating of their drums.

When we saw what they really meant, and how confident they were, we naturally recalled the attack upon us a few days back, and our wounds which had not yet healed, and how two of our men had died of injuries. And as the number of Indians kept on increasing, we became alarmed and resolved to retreat in best possible order. In such form we marched along the coast to where our casks lay, and finally managed to get our water safe on board the ships and ourselves re-embarked.

Six days and six nights we continued our course with fair weather. But suddenly the wind veered to the north, and during a storm which lasted four days and nights we nearly found a sea-grave. To save ourselves we cast anchor near the shore. Our ropes were old, for in our fitting out we had not money enough to buy new, strong cables. Two of them gave way, and our ship began to drag her anchor. If the last rope were to yield, we should be cast away! Oh, how perilously were we placed! But Providence willed that our aged and worn cable should hold, and when the storm abated we were able to proceed on our voyage.

As we coasted along we espied a village, and beyond it an inner harbor. We now saw that again we needed a fresh supply of water, for our casks were old, as I said, and wasted in leakage. We resolved to land, hoping to find at the head of the harbor a brook, or river, or fresh water. We did find wells, and also maize fields and stone buildings, and while we were busy filling our casks, numbers of Indians came over towards us from the village. Their bodies were painted white, brown and black, they had on cotton cuirasses which came to the knee, and they bore such arms as lances, bows, swords and slings. They advanced in profound silence, as if with peaceful mind, and by signs asked us if we came from the rising of the sun. In return we signed that we had indeed come from the rising of the sun.

Besides our water casks we had also carried with us our crossbows and muskets. And now we had closed our ranks and taken every precaution, when we heard the cries and yells of many natives advancing from various quarters. We could no longer doubt the warriors meant to attack us. We therefore consulted with our captain what course we should adopt. Many of us believed that our best plan was to re-embark in all haste. But, as is always the case in critical moments, one advised this, another that, and the proposal to return was lost on the ground that the Indians would fall on us while we were getting into the boats and kill us, every one.

After a time we perceived more troops moving towards the coast, and with flying colors. They had on their feather knots and bore all their different kinds of arms. Dividing into several bands, they filed round us on all sides and then began pouring on us such a shower of arrows, lances and stones that they wounded more than eighty of our men at the first onset. But when they rushed furiously forward and attacked us man for man, we dealt many a good blow, keeping up at the same time an incessant fire with our muskets and crossbows, for while some loaded others fired. At last by dint of heavy thrusts we forced them to give way, and then we made for our boats.

But serious misfortunes still awaited us, for our boats sank, or capsized, in our rush to get into them, and we were forced to cling to them as well as we could, and so, partly by swimming, to make our way to our small ship, which was now hastening to our aid. Our assailants wounded many of us even while we were climbing into the ship.

The battle had lasted little longer than half an hour, but more than fifty of us were killed, and two the Indians had carried off alive. We who survived returned thanks to Almighty God for the preservation of our lives as soon as we found ourselves in safety. When we began dressing our wounds we found that none of us had escaped without two or three, save one soldier; and our captain had as many as twelve. Those of the sailors who had accompanied us to shore were also hurt, and since we had now not hands enough to work the sails, we determined to return to Cuba.

But we still had to struggle with a greater evil — want of fresh water — for although we had filled our leaky barrels and casks, because of the furious attack of the natives and our haste to get on board, we had not been able to bring them off. Our thirst was intense. The only way we could in some measure refresh our parched tongues was to hold the edge of our axes between our lips. Oh, what a fearful undertaking it is to venture out on the discovery of new countries! Those alone can form idea of it who have gone through its hard school.

CHAPTER II

How the Governor of Cuba ordered another fleet sent out, and what happened.

In the following year of our Lord, 1518, after he had heard the good account we gave of the country we discovered, Diego Velasquez, governor of Cuba, determined to send another expedition there. He chose four vessels, of which were the two we soldiers had purchased at our own cost and sailed in with Cordova.

While he was busily engaged in fitting out this squadron, I, Bernal Diaz of Castile, worn out and miserably poor, arrived at Santiago de Cuba, where he lived; and I called upon him, for we were kinsmen. He was highly pleased to see me and asked if my wounds were healed so that I could make another trip to Yucatan. I, laughing, asked him who had given the country that name. He answered, " The Indians you brought back call it that." " Call it rather," I returned, " the land where they killed one half of our men and wounded the other half." " I know you underwent many hardships," he answered; " hardships come to those who set out to discover new lands and win honor, and his majesty, the king, to whom I shall write, will reward you. Therefore, my son, join yourself to the fleet I am getting ready, and I will tell the captain to treat you with honor."

The account we had brought back that houses in the newly discovered country were built of stone, had spread a vast idea of the riches of its people, and, added to this, one of our Indians had said there was gold. So soldiers, and settlers who owned no Indians in Cuba, were eager to go to the new land, and in a very short time we mustered two hundred and twenty companions. Every one of us, out of his own funds, furnished what he could of arms, stores and other things for himself.

With four men of courage and energy and means Velasquez soon came to terms — one of them, Juan de Grijalva, a kinsman of his, was to have chief command of the expedition, while the other three should each control a ship. These officers were also to furnish stores of cassava bread and salt pork, and Diego Velasquez to provide crossbows, guns, and supply of beans, and beads and other things for barter.

The instructions Velasquez gave our officers, so far as I could learn, were to barter for all the gold and silver they could find, and to form a settlement, if they deemed it advisable; if not, then to return to Cuba.

On the 5th of April, 1518, we met together, and after the pilots, three of whom accompanied us on our former voyage, had had their instructions and the signals had been fixed, we paid our devotions at church and weighed anchor. In ten days we doubled the point called by the sailors San Anton, and eight days after we sighted the island of Cozumel. Our ships, carried by currents of the sea, stood further off than when we were there with Cordova, and we landed on the south side of the island, where was good anchorage, free from reefs, and also a town.

A large body of us went on shore with our captain, but the people of the town, when they saw our ships approaching, took to flight, because they had never seen such a sight before. We found two weak, old men, however, hidden in a corn field, and we brought them before our captain. With the help of Julian and Melchior, whom, as I said, we had taken in our previous visit — with the help of our two Indians, who understood their language, our captain spoke kindly to these feeble old men and gave them some beads, and sent them away to bring the cacique of the town. But they never again appeared.

While we were still waiting for their return, a comely Indian woman came towards us and began talking in the language of Jamaica, which many among us understood. She said the people had fled to the mountains out of fear of us. Our captain then dispatched her to fetch them back, but she could persuade none to come. She told us that two years before she had left Jamaica with ten Indians in a large canoe with the plan to fish near some small island. But sea-currents had driven them to this shore, and the people had killed her husband and the other Indians in sacrifices to their gods.

As soon as we had boarded our ships, we took the course we had taken under Cordova the year before, and after eight days arrived off the coast where the natives had used us so ill and had slain fifty of our men and wounded the rest, Chanpoton. In these parts the sea is very shallow, and we anchored about three miles from the shore. The Indians gathered, as they had done the year before, and their haughty bearing showed they had not forgotten their victory. They were all well armed after their manner, with lances, bows and arrows, shields, slings and broad-swords, and they bore drums and trumpets, while they wore cotton cuirasses and had their faces painted black and white. Ranged along the seashore, they stood ready to fall upon us when we landed. We had learned prudence by suffering, however, and this time were well armed.

When we were near enough to be hit, they let fly such a shower of arrows that they speedily wounded half our men. We gave them return with our matchlocks and good swords, however, as soon as we got on shore. Still they kept up the fight against us, each selecting a man against whom, as at a target, they shot. At length we were able to drive them back to the wells of the town. We had taken the precaution to put on cotton cuirasses, yet in the combat we lost seven soldiers, had over sixty men wounded, and our captain, Juan de Grijalva, got three arrow wounds and lost two of his teeth.

Not a single native stayed in the town, which, after putting our enemy to flight, we entered to dress our wounds and bury the dead. The three we made prisoners our captain treated with every kindness, gave them green beads and small bells to give to the people to gain their good will, and sent them to summon their chief. They left us, indeed, but took good care not to come back.

I shall never forget this place because of the immense locusts we saw here. While we were fighting they jumped up and kept flying in our faces, and as the Indians were storming us with arrows at the same time, we sometimes mistook the locusts for arrows. But as soon as we saw our mistake, we made another worse, for when the arrows were coming towards us, we thought them only flying locusts, and in consequence we suffered greatly.

Making our way towards the west, sailing along the coast by day and at night lying to on account of the shallows and rocks, we saw one morning the very broad mouth of a river, and we went near shore with the ships, thinking we should find good harborage. As we came closer in we saw the waves breaking, and found that our larger vessels could not enter because of a bar. It was therefore determined that the two smaller ships, which did not draw so much water, with all our boats well manned, should go on up the river. To this time the river had been called Tabasco, because the chief of the town called himself Tabasco. But since we discovered it during this expedition, we gave it the name of Grijalva, in honor of our captain, and under that name it stands on the sea charts.

Along the shore we could see troops of Indians with bows and arrows and other weapons, after the fashion of the people of Chanpoton, and we reasoned that a town could not be far off. We might have been say two miles from the town, when we heard the sound of the felling of trees. The Indians were making barricades and getting ready for war against us. As soon as we learned this, we disembarked on a point of land where some palm trees were growing. When they saw us land, Indians armed after their manner made towards us in fifty canoes, while many other canoes, manned in the same way, lay off in the creeks as if the warriors dared not approach us.

Seeing how ready they were for action, we were on the point of firing our great guns, when it pleased God to prompt us first to try and gain their friendship. Through our Indians, Julian and Melchior, therefore, we told them they had nothing to fear from us; that we wished to talk with them and had things to tell, which, as soon as they learned, they would be glad we came to their country; moreover, they should come to us and we would gladly give them of the things we had brought.

When they heard our message, four of the canoes neared us, and we showed the thirty Indians sitting in them strings of glass beads and small mirrors. At the sight of green beads they were delighted, for they thought them made of chalchihuites, a jadeite, which they treasure as very precious.

Then, again, through our Indian interpreters our captain told them we had come from a distant country and were subjects of a great emperor whose name was Don Carlos, who had many lords as vassals, and that they ought to acknowledge him as their lord, and then it would go well with them; also, in exchange for the beads they should bring us fowls and other food.

Two of the Indians, one of them a chief and the other a papa, that is, a priest of their religion,—these two answered and said they would bring the food we wanted, and would barter with us; but, for the rest, they already had a chief, and they could not help feeling a good deal astonished that we, who had just arrived, should be wanting to put a master over them; we should beware about making war as we had done at Chanpoton, for they had at hand three armies, each of eight thousand men; to find what we intended to do was their real errand, however, and whatever it was they should report to caciques assembled from many towns to unite for peace or war.

In token of peace our captain now embraced the ambassadors and presented them with strings of glass beads, desiring them to bring back answer as soon as possible, and adding that if they did not come back, we should have to enter their town by force.

But after consulting their caciques and papas, they returned and told us they would accept our offers of peace and supply us with food; and not only they themselves, but the neighboring towns would make us a present of gold to insure our friendship. Indians commonly, we afterwards learned, give presents when making peace.

The following day about thirty Indians, laden with roasted fish and fowls, maize bread and fruit, came to the promontory where the palms stood. They also brought pans filled with live coals on which they strewed resin and incensed all of us. After this they spread some mats on the ground, and over the mats cotton cloths, and on these some small ornaments of gold in the shape of lizards and ducks, and three necklaces and other articles made of a low grade of gold. Although the presents they offered were of little value, all together not worth two hundred dollars, still we were glad of the proof they brought that there was gold in this country. They also brought some cloaks and waistcoats, such as they wear, and said we must accept them in good part for they had no more gold to give us, but that further on, towards the setting of the sun, there was plenty of gold, adding "Colua! Colua! Mexico! Mexico!" We, however, did not know what Colua, or Mexico, could mean.

As soon as they had made us the presents they told us we might set out, and after our captain had thanked them and given each some green beads, we determined to re-embark, for if a norther should begin to blow the two ships would be in danger; and we had now, moreover, to go in quest of that strange country, "Mexico! Mexico!" which, these Indians said, abounded in gold.

We boarded our ships and ran along the coast for two days, when we came in sight of a town. We could see crowds of Indians hurrying to and fro along the shore — their shields made of huge tortoise-shells glittered so beautifully in the sun that some of our soldiers believed them gold. Further along we came to a bay into which the Tonala flows, and we gave the river the name of San Antonio, which it still has upon the maps. And we also passed the mouth of the great Coatzacoalcos, where we would gladly have run in the bay, if winds had not prevented. Soon we sighted great snow mountains, crested with snow the whole year round, and other mountains, too, nearer the sea, which we called San Martin because a soldier of that name, who came from Havana, was the first to see them.

So we kept on our course, all four ships together, when we came to the mouth of another river, which we called the Banderas* or flag stream, because there a troop of Indians filled the river banks, and each lance they bore carried a flag of white cloth with which they waved to and beckoned us.

By this time the great city of Mexico must be known throughout Christendom — how like Venice it was built in the water, how it was governed by a mighty monarch, Montezuma, king of countries more than four times as large as Spain, a lord so powerful he would extend his rule beyond what was possible and would know things he never could learn. This great Montezuma had received news of our visit under Cordova the year before, and of what happened at the battle of Chanpoton during this present voyage, and he knew that we soldiers, merely a handful, had defeated the warriors of that town and their allies. Moreover, he had learned that we sought gold, and for that we gladly exchanged our goods. All this information he had from time to time received through figures drawn, as is the custom of the people, on a thick cloth much like linen and made from fibres of the maguey.

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* Rio Jamapa on modern maps.

Now, when Montezuma knew we were coasting along towards his dominions, he sent orders to his governors that at every place where we landed they should exchange gold for our glass beads, especially for the green beads which so much resemble their valued chalchihuites or jadeite. Further, he ordered them to gain all knowledge they could of us and of our plans. The reason he dwelt most particularly upon the last point was that a legend of their Indian ancestors had foretold how men with beards should, in the future, come from the rising of the sun and gain dominion over them.

For whatever purpose it may have been, the great Montezuma had ordered these sentinels who filled the banks of the river, and every lance hung with a white cotton cloth, which the sentinels waved inviting us to come to them.

For ourselves, we were fairly astonished at so novel a sight, and our captain, with other officers and soldiers, agreed to find out what the whole matter meant. We therefore lowered two of our boats and manned them with twenty of our most daring soldiers, who, with Francisco de Montejo in command, should go to enquire. I was of the number. It pleased God that the weather should be calm, which is rare enough on these coasts, and we all got safely ashore, where three caciques, one of them a governor under Montezuma, met us. They were attended by many Indians, who brought fowls, maize bread, pineapples and other food, and they spread mats in the shade of trees and invited us to sit down, all by signs, for Julian from Yucatan did not understand their Mexican language. Then they brought clay pans filled with live coals, on which they strewed a resin and incensed us.

As soon as Francisco de Montejo sent word of what had taken place, our captain determined to anchor the ships and go ashore with all our men. When he landed the cacique paid him most marked respect and incensed him with great zeal. He in return gave them beads and treated them in every friendly way, and after he signified that they should bring gold to barter, the governor sent orders to neighboring towns to fetch every trinket they had in the shape of gold for exchange with us. Thus it happened that during the six days we stayed there they brought more than sixteen thousand dollars' worth of jewelry of low grade gold and various workmanship.

In the name of his majesty, the king of Spain, we took possession of the land, and as soon as we did this our captain presented the Indians with some Spanish shirts and told them we wished to return to our ships. One of their number we took with us, and after he had learned our language he became a Christian named Francisco.

Further along the coast we sighted islands, among them one, about five miles from the shore, which offered us a very good roadstead. Here our captain gave orders for the ships to come to anchor, and after we had lowered boats many of us soldiers went aland, for we had seen smoke as we neared the shore. We found two strongly built stone houses, each with steps leading up to an altar, and on these altars idols of horrible shapes. Bodies of five natives still lay where the night before the papas had sacrificed them — their chests cut open, their arms and legs off, while the walls about were besmeared with blood. At all this we stood in utter amazement, and gave the island the name of Isla de Sacrificios.

Sailing onwards, we anchored opposite another island about two miles from the main land — at a harbor at present thought the best in the country, the port of Vera Cruz. When we were landed on the sands of this beach, swarms of mosquitos so annoyed us that we had to build huts on the great sand dunes, and in the tops of trees. From our boats we carefully examined the harbor and found that it had a good bottom for anchorage, and it was, moreover, sheltered from northers. Our captain and thirty of us soldiers, all well armed, went over the island, and found a temple on which stood a large and ugly idol of the god Tezcatlipoca.* Four Indian priests or papas, clad in wide black cloaks, and with flying hair, had that very day offered the hearts and blood of two boys before the horrible figure. The papas came towards us to incense us with the perfuming resin with which they had incensed Tezcatlipoca, but we were so shocked at the sight of those two boys they had just killed, and so disgusted with their abominations, we would not suffer their incense. Our captain, by signs, questioned the Indian Francisco, whom we had brought with us from the Banderas stream, and who seemed to be intelligent, and Francisco answered that the people of Colua had ordered the sacrifices. As Francisco halted in his speech, he pronounced the word "Olua, Olua," and from this happening, and because our captain himself was present and was named Juan, and also because it was the day of St. John in June, we called this small island San Juan de Ulua.* This harbor, we say, has been much frequented. In the fifty years since our discovery of it great numbers of ships have refitted there; and now all merchandise from Castile for Mexico is there unladen.

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* When, in the following pages, the reader meets the names Tezcatlipoca and Huitzilopochtli, will he kindly bear in mind these differences between the two gods?

There were few departments of native life with which the god Tezcatlipoca was not intimately connected. He was present everywhere and saw all that happened and therefore his images bore a mirror as a symbol. As the night wind he was supposed to wander through the streets after dark in search of evil doers, and as night-god and warrior-god to appear in all sorts of grisly shapes to test the courage of those he might meet. Schools in which children prepared for military service were under his protection. Of slaves he was defender. As god of divine punishment he was also god of confession — the penitent confessing his sins before a priest whom he regarded as representative of the god and who gave absolution. The fifth months of the year, beginning the 23rd of April, was symbolized by a figure of the god and was the occasion of the feast at which a young man, identified with the god, was sacrificed to him after a year spent in the enjoyment of every luxury that Mexican civilization could afford.

Huitzilopochtli was tribal god of the Aztecs to whom he gave the bow, saying, "All that flies on high do the Mexicans know how to hit with the arrow." God of war and of hunting he sprang, the legend ran, from an earth goddess after a ball of down had fallen on her from heaven. The ninth month beginning the 12th of July was sometimes symbolized by a figure of Huitzilopochtli, and celebrated by a flower-feast. For further knowledge about gods of the Mexicans the reader should consult "Mexican Archæology" by Thomas A. Joyce — from which book the contents of this note were gained.

While we were encamped on these sand dunes, natives from nearby towns brought us gold trinkets for barter, but the few things were so poor in quality that we scarce troubled ourselves about them. In the huts we had built we stayed seven days, although we suffered much discomfort from mosquitos. Our captain, Grijalva, who had proved himself a large-minded man and brave soldier, was well minded to found a colony even with our few men. But because we were now convinced that these lands before us were the mainland and contained large towns, and because our cassava bread had become mouldy and unfit to eat, and because our numbers were too few to permit us to form a settlement — thirteen of our men had died of wounds and four were still ill — we agreed to forward to Diego Velasquez account of our condition and ask him to send succor. To go on this mission to Cuba, Pedro de Alvarado was chosen, and he soon sailed in the good ship *San Sebastian,* taking with him all the gold and cotton cloth we had bartered for, and also our sick men. The officers of the other ships, each giving his own account, also sent the governor letters of what we had seen.

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* In the halting of the speech of this Indian is the origin of the name of the celebrated fort of San Juan de Ulua, on one of the reefs fronting Vera Cruz — a name enduring through most varied fortunes of three centuries.

From the moment our fleet had quitted Cuba, Diego Velasquez had been downcast and anxious lest some misfortune befall us. When, however, Alvarado came into port with the gold and cloth and sick men, and when Velasquez saw the gold worked into various trinkets, and heard the whole story of what we had found, his joy was great. Nor were the officers who received the king's fifth less astonished at the riches of the lands we had discovered.

Alvarado, who knew how to gain over Diego Velasquez, afterwards said that the governor could do nothing but embrace him, and that he ordered festivities and sports for eight days. Rumor of riches in these lands had already gone about, but now that gold had really come, fanciful reports spread through all the islands and the whole of Spain.

After Alvarado had set sail for Cuba our officers held our course along the coast, and we saw numbers of towns lying from six to nine miles inland. From one of these a troop of Indians in twenty large canoes came out and attacked us. We continued our course, however, until we neared a wide cape,* where on account of strong currents we could make no headway, and it was finally agreed that we should return to Cuba.

We therefore turned our ships about, hoisted all sails, and, aided by the currents, came in a few days to the waters of the broad Coatzacoalcos. Here boisterous weather forced us onward to the smaller river Tonala, where we careened one of our ships, for she had struck three several times on entering the river and was fast making water.

While we were busy at this work many Indians came from the town of Tonala, about four miles away, and with great good will brought us maize bread, fish and fruits. Our commander paid them kind attentions and gave them white and green glass beads, signing to them also that they should bring us gold for barter and that for it we would give our goods in return. They brought gold, and this also did people from Coatzacoalcos, exchanging their ornaments — of a debased gold, however — for the green glass beads they highly valued.

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* Cape Roxo.

Besides gold, every Indian had with him a highly polished copper axe, the handle curiously wrought as if to serve as well for an ornament as for battle use. We thought these axes were made of a low grade gold and began bartering for them, with the result that within three days we had taken more than six hundred, with which we, thinking, I say, they contained gold, were even more content than the Indians were with their green glass beads.

How I sowed some orange seeds in this place I must tell. So many mosquitos swarmed along the river that I one day went up and lay down to rest in a tall temple of the Indians. In gratitude for the quiet sleep I had, and because it was rumored that we were to come back there to settle, I planted at the foot of the temple eight orange seeds I had brought with me from Cuba. When they came up the papas of the temple must have seen they were plants different from those they knew, and they must have protected them from the ants and weeds, and watered them. For years after, when we had conquered Mexico, and the most illustrious of the conquerors, among which number was myself, settled in this province, I did not forget to look for, and to my joy find, my orange trees. I transplanted them and they flourished most uncommonly, and all the oranges of New Spain are descendants of my plants. I know well it will be said such old tales are quite out of character here, so I will tell no more of them.

Boarding our ships again we set sail for Cuba, and after more than forty days of weather, sometimes fair and sometimes foul, we arrived at Santiago. When Diego Velasquez saw the gold we had brought, well worth four thousand dollars, he was highly pleased, for with that already given over by Alvarado, the amount was now twenty thousand dollars. Some made the sum less, some even more. Officers of the king took the royal fifth, and were so minded as to the six hundred axes, but when these were brought out and seen to be merely a good kind of copper there was a good laugh at us and much broad-spread fun at our zeal in bartering.

CHAPTER III

How Diego Velasquez petitioned the king of Spain to grant him commission to conquer, settle and apportion the land; and we came again with a new fleet with Cortes as captain.

Before I begin to tell of Cortes and our expedition of which he was the commander, I must relate certain happenings which can not be omitted, for they bore on later events.

After Alvarado had arrived at Santiago with the gold we had gained in the newly discovered lands, Diego Velasquez began to fear that, before he could make his report to the king, some court favorite, getting private news of our discoveries, might rob him of his reward. For this reason he sent to Spain a chaplain of his, Benito Martinez, a man skilled in business, to bear letters and a great portion of the gold trinkets to Juan Rodriguez, bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano; and also to the licentiate Luis Zapata and the secretary Lope de Conchillos, who at that time had charge of Indian affairs under the archbishop. Our governor of Cuba, Diego Velasquez, was quite devoted to these men and had given them sizable Indian villages, with the people of which they worked gold-mines. For this reason they were disposed to do much for Diego Velasquez.

King Charles of Spain was at this time in Flanders, and everything done by the Imperial Council of the Indies was by command of these gentlemen. What Diego Velasquez sought through his chaplain was permission to trade with, conquer and found colonies in the countries we had lately discovered. In the accounts he forwarded he told of the many thousands of dollars he had already spent in the undertaking. Chaplain Benito Martinez added so successfully to these reports that he was able to bring back from Spain a decree granting all Diego Velasquez asked, and also, for the governor, the title of adelantado, or governor-in-chief, of Cuba.

Upon the return of Juan de Grijalva from our voyage, in the year 1518, Diego Velasquez had at once ordered the fitting out of a fleet larger than our last. For this purpose he had already got together in the harbor of Santiago ten ships; four of them, careened and refitted, were those in which we had returned, and six others from other ports of Cuba. These vessels he had provisioned with cassava bread and smoked bacon, for at that time, as I have said, Cuba had been so lately settled that there was neither mutton nor beef to be had.

But all this while Diego Velasquez could not make up his mind whom he should name as commander. Certain gentlemen put forward a captain of great renown, Vasco Porcallo, related to some earl. This man, however, did not suit Diego Velasquez, for he feared, since the captain was very daring, he would turn against him when once the fleet was in his hands. Others talked of various kinsmen of Velasquez for the place. We soldiers would hear of none other than our Juan de Grijalva, who was himself valiant and knew how to command, and who bore an unstained character.

While like rumors were afloat the affair was secretly settled with Hernando Cortes, a native of Medellin, a gentleman who held a grant of Indians in Cuba. Two favorites of Diego Velasquez had come to an agreement with Cortes. These two did all in their power to induce the governor to appoint Cortes commander-in-chief of the fleet, taking every occasion to praise Cortes, to extol his energy, his courage, his ability to command, his faithfulness in everything entrusted to his charge — for Cortes had promised to divide between the three of them all gains which, during this expedition, might fall to his share, and his spoils might turn out to be very large, for the real design of Diego Velasquez in sending the expedition was to barter with the natives and not to form settlements as was announced and published. In the end Velasquez chose Cortes captain-general.

The next Sunday, when Diego Velasquez was on his way to church, and in company with the principal persons of the town, he placed Cortes on his right side to do him honor. While they were on the road a jester, nicknamed Fool Cervantes, ran in front of the governor, playing pranks and cracking all sorts of jokes. "Alas! alas! my friend Diego," he cried, "what manner of captain have you chosen? He of Medellin in Estramadura! A captain to try his luck in no little way. Have care that he does not run off with your fleet, for you can see by his face he is terrible when once he begins."

As Fool Cervantes was running on in this strain, growing more and more severe, one of the favorites of Velasquez, walking by the side of Cortes, gave the fellow a cuff, crying, "Silence, thou drunken knave! I know this scandalous wit of thine never sprang in thy brain!" But, taking no notice of the blow, the fool still ran on, "Long life to my friend Diego and the valiant captain, Cortes! Master Diego, that you may not weep over your bargain, I must go myself with Cortes to those rich lands."

Nobody doubted for a moment but some kinsmen of the governor had hired the jester to utter these sayings, and to pass them off as wit. Everything the fool predicted, nevertheless, came true to the letter and goes to prove that often fools speak the truth. Still, it became in the end certain that the appointment of Hernando Cortes was pleasing in the eye of God, and of first importance to his majesty, the king of Spain.*

As soon as Cortes had received his commission he set about to gather all manner of arms and warlike stores, matchlocks, crossbows, powder and the like; and also a large stock of goods for barter, and everything necessary for the expedition. Now, also, he became more careful of his appearance, and wore a bunch of feathers fastened on his cap with a gold medal, and a velvet cloak trimmed with gold — which made him look more gallant. His countenance was most winning, he talked well and his affability drew people to him. Twice he had been alcalde, or mayor, of the town in which he lived.

Notwithstanding all this, Cortes was at that time greatly pinched for money to buy what he needed, and was head over ears in debt. But when his friends among the merchants heard he had been made commander, they lent him four thousand dollars in coin, and still more secured by his Indians and es-

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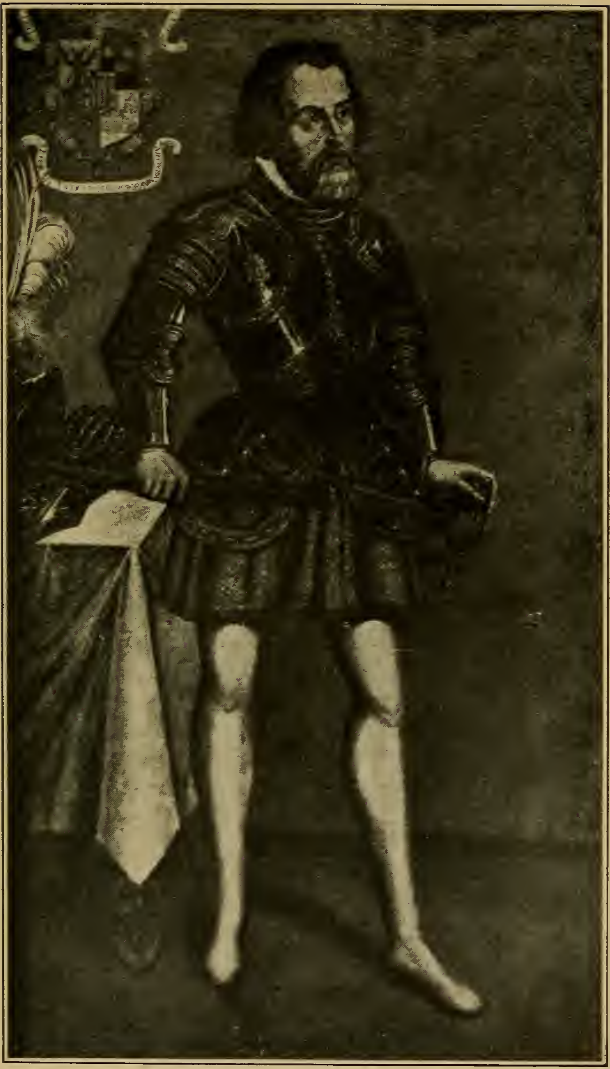
* "I must inform the reader," wrote Bernal Diaz, "why, when speaking of Cortes, I never call him Don Hernando Cortes, or marquis, or by any other title but plainly Cortes. The reason is that he himself was best pleased when he was simply addressed as Cortes. And besides this first reason is a second; — the name of Cortes stood in equal renown throughout the whole of Spain after the mastering of Mexico, as in old Roman times the names of Julius Cæsar and of Pompey stood among the Roman peoples, and among the Carthaginians the name of Hannibal."



Hernando Cortes

tates. With this money he ordered two standards and banners worked in gold with the royal arms and a cross on each side and beneath an inscription saying, " Brothers, in true faith let us follow the cross, and victory is ours." He then made known in the name of his majesty and of the governor, and by sound of trumpet and drum, that whatsoever person wished to go in his company to the newly discovered lands to conquer and settle, should have share in the gold, silver and riches gained. To any one who settled there, after the country had been pacified, he promised (although Benito Martinez had not yet returned from Spain with authority to Velasquez to grant this) charge of Indians and landed property.

Upon all the people of Cuba this proclamation made deep impression. Cortes wrote to all his friends in the various towns also, begging them to get ready and join the expedition. Many sold all they had to buy themselves arms and a horse. Others began to prepare cassava bread and salt pork for provisioning the ships, and so make ready the best they could.

But while Cortes was working hard to push forward preparations and get his fleet under way, relatives of Velasquez, feeling themselves aggrieved because Cortes had the headship, and still hoping finally to gain the commission, took every occasion to lower him in the eyes of Velasquez. Fully knowing this, Cortes aimed to be every day at the governor's side, to show his zeal in serving him, and to talk of the glory of the undertaking and the vast riches that would accrue from it to Diego Velasquez. Nevertheless, one of the two favorites who had gained the appointment for Cortes was always urging the captain to hasten his embarking — before the relatives, moved by envy and malice, should change the governor's mind.

Finally, everything being in readiness and a rumor getting afloat that Velasquez had determined to take the command from Cortes, our captain ordered that all officers, pilots, soldiers, and as much provision as possible, should be aboard by a certain nightfall. With this company of three hundred he embarked and was about to set sail, when friends roused the sleeping Diego Velasquez. The governor, springing from his bed, mounted his horse and galloped to the landing. Upon Cortes seeing him, he, accompanied by trusty men, entered a boat armed with cannon and muskets, and rowed within speaking distance. There the boat stopped. "Is this the way you are parting from me, my friend?" called Velasquez. "Is this the right way to take your leave?" "Your excellency must pardon me," answered Cortes, "there are some things that must be done before they are thought of. I am at your excellency's orders." But when Diego Velasquez saw how evident Cortes had made his bad faith and shamelessness, he had nothing to say. Upon this Cortes ordered the boat to return to the ship, and sails hoisted for all speed — the 18th of November, 1518.

Weather being fine, we arrived, after a few days' sail, safely in the harbor of Trinidad, where the people came out to welcome us, each gentleman striving to have our captain for his guest. Cortes set up his standard in front of his quarters and issued a proclamation, and, as he had done in Santiago, got together what he could of fire-arms, cassava bread, salted meat and other necessities.

Here many gentlemen joined us, a number coming from Santispiritus, to which towns Cortes had written public letters, for he knew well how to mix fair words in his sentences and offer promises, and to attract many persons of standing in these towns. Here, also, he hired soldiers and bought horses. Alonzo Hernandez Puertocarrero had not money enough to buy one, so Cortes bought one for him and paid for it with gold trimmings from the velvet cloak he had had made at Santiago.

Meanwhile Diego Velasquez had forwarded letters and commands that Cortes be sent to him. For, after he had set out from Santiago with all the ships, relatives of Velasquez and their clique left the governor not a moment's peace, telling him Cortes showed that he was already in rebellion by his sneaking out of the harbor, and that he had never made any secret of his intention to be commander, that he had dealt as if he owned the fleet, and finally that he had entered into arrangements with the two favorites to gain the command for him.

These speeches, added to his natural suspicions, turned the head of Velasquez, and he despatched messages to the alcalde of Trinidad, his brother-in-law, peremptorily ordering him to deprive Cortes of the squadron. But the alcalde saw that Cortes had so many friends among the soldiers and officers that the whole town would be divided, and perhaps sacked, and he hesitated to act; while Cortes, writing Velasquez of his astonishment at his decision, repeating his desire to serve God and his governor, and advising him to listen no further to his cousin, sent his letter by the messenger who had brought the order for his arrest.

The next step of Cortes was to have his men put their arms in repair, and every smith in town was soon at work pointing our lances, while the cross-bowmen overhauled stocks and made arrows. After twelve days at Trinidad we sailed for Havana.

Each man of us had his choice either to go to Havana by sea, or march by land and pick up some men who lived along the way. Fifty other soldiers and I gladly joined Alvarado, who had command overland, and our duties were increased by charge of all our horses. Every one of us arrived safely in Havana. But five days passed without news of Cortes and his ship, and we began to wonder if he had been lost near the Isle of Pines. At last, to the great joy of us gentlemen and soldiers, his ship appeared over the horizon. It seemed he had had the misfortune, when off the Isle of Pines, to run aground, for many shallows are there, and all the cargo of his ship had to be taken ashore in boatfuls before she could be floated, and, after she had taken deeper water, to be carried back and again packed in.

The heart of Cortes leaped with joy when he saw assembled in Havana the many men of rank who had joined us. They brought to our stores quantities of cassava bread and cured bacon. And now cotton being very plentiful, we made well padded cuirasses to protect ourselves from the Indians' darts, arrows, lances and stones, and meanwhile Cortes ordered our heavy guns, ten brass cannon and a few falconets brought ashore, tested and furnished with balls and powder.

When all this was settled, the horses and stores of maize and hay for their provender were distributed among the ships. Cortes had a dark chestnut horse. Pedro de Alvarado and Hernando de Avila had jointly an excellent brown mare, broken in for sport and battle alike. Alonzo Hernandez Puertocarrero, a grey mare, the same which Cortes had bought for him with the gold border from his cloak; and she was capitally trained for battle. Juan Velasquez de Leon, a grey mare also, a noble animal full of fire and eager for battle — we commonly called her Bobtail. Cristobal de Olid, a dark chestnut, fine-spirited horse. Francisco de Montejo and Alonzo de Avila, between them, a sorrel horse of little use in battle. Francisco de Morla, a dark chestnut horse, wonderfully swift and easily guided, while Juan de Escalente had a light chestnut horse with three white stockings, not worth much, and Diego de Ordas had a grey mare that was tolerably good, but not swift. Gonzalo Dominguez, a small, dark chestnut horse, very swift. Pedro Gonzalez de Trujillo had also a chestnut that was a good goer. Moron had a very handy dappled horse, Baena a dappled horse that was a bad leaper, Lares an excellent, light-chestnut goer, Ortiz, the musician, and Bartolome Garcia, between them, a good dark horse, which they called The Muledriver, and Juan Sedeno, a chestnut mare. This Juan Sedeno was thought the richest soldier in the fleet, for he had a ship of his own, his own lading of cassava bread and salt pork, a negro and a horse — and about that time horses and negroes were worth their weight in gold.

Let us turn back for a moment to Diego Velasquez. When he knew for certain that his brother-in-law, the alcalde of Trinidad, had not only confirmed Cortes in his government of the fleet, but had helped him to get away, he roared with rage, they said, declaring Cortes had run off with the whole squadron, and that his own two favorites had lent the captain every possible aid. Nor did he stop here. He despatched letters to his sub-governor of Havana, and to his friends there, praying them by all the friendship they bore him not to permit the fleet to get away, and to send Cortes under guard to Santiago.

As soon as the bearer of these despatches arrived, Cortes learned their tenor, and through the bearer himself — for a friar of the Order of Mercy, who was much in the company of Velasquez, forwarded by this same messenger a letter to a friar who was in the fleet. By this means Cortes learned the whole affair, and he at once went to the sub-governor and won him to his side — this was easily done because the sub-governor was put out with Velasquez for not giving him a better grant of Indians — so that he sent back the messenger with the word that he dared not seize Cortes, for he was too beloved by his soldiers, and he feared, if he should, they would sack the town and carry off his people. Cortes himself wrote to Velasquez in the smooth terms he knew so well how to use, assuring him that he did nothing against the governor's interests, that he was his faithful servant and was going to set sail the very next day.

The fleet sailed on the 10th of February, 1519, and shaping its course direct to Cozumel, we landed our men in the same harbor I mentioned when I told of our expedition under Grijalva. Three days after we were landed Cortes ordered a muster to see how many of us there were. Not counting pilots and sailors, who were about one hundred, we numbered five hundred and eight men; and sixteen horses or mares, all trained for sport or war. We had eleven ships, great and small, and one, a sort of brig, which belonged to one man. Thirteen of our number were musketeers, and thirty-two, perhaps, crossbowmen. Added to these were our ten cannon, four falconets and quantities of powder and balls.

After this review, Cortes ordered certain artillerymen to keep all our guns clean and ready for use, and likewise two crossbowmen to inspect the crossbows and see that every crossbow had two or three nuts and as many cords carefully stored. He also ordered that the men should exercise in shooting at a target, and the horses be accustomed to fire-arms and kept in fine condition. But I should not use so much ink in telling how particular and exact Cortes was — except to say he was most vigilant about the merest trifles.

CHAPTER IV

How we found the Spaniard, Aguilar, slave to a cacique; and what happened at Tabasco.

CORTES was most attentive to every detail, I say, and that trait led to his sending for me and another and asking us what we thought about those words, "Castilan! Castilan!" which the Indians of Campeche had cried when, under Cordova, we landed there. He said he had often thought about the circumstance and could not help believing some Spaniards must be living among them and it now seemed to him that it would not be amiss to ask the caciques of Cozumel as to the whole matter. We therefore questioned the chiefs, through Melchior, who had now gained a little Spanish, and were overjoyed to hear that certain Spaniards did serve caciques living two days' march inland.

The caciques we questioned undertook to forward letters to these Spaniards. When Cortes gave them presents, and promised more on their return, they said that it would be necessary to send a ransom in addition, for the Spaniards served as slaves. The messengers therefore carried with them every sort of glass beads. Two of our smaller ships, with crossbowmen and musketeers, went in the quest, the larger ship to wait while the messengers carried letters to and from the captive Spaniards, and the smaller to bear news to Cortes of what was being done.

After lapse of a few days our letters reached a Spaniard named Aguilar. When he read how Cortes urged the captives to join him, and when he received his ransom, he was glad beyond all measure, and hastening with his beads to the cacique who was his master, begged leave to depart. The cacique at once consented, and Aguilar set out in quest of his companion. But when he reached this old-time comrade of his and read to him Cortes' letter calling them to liberty and to associations with their fellow countrymen, the old comrade said, " Brother Aguilar, I have married one of the women of this country and I have three children. The Indians look upon me in war time as a cacique. Do you go, and God be with you. But my face is tattooed, my ears pierced and my lips turned down. What would the Spaniards say if they saw me in such a fix? And look at these three children of mine, how lovely they are! Give me some of your beads for them, and I will say that my brothers sent them from my country." At this moment the Spaniard's Indian wife, who, warming with anger, had been watching Aguilar, cried, " Look at that slave! Why is he coming here to talk to my husband?"— and turning to Aguilar she added, "Mind your own business, and don't you trouble yourself about us."

After a considerable delay, we despairing of finding him, and he of ever reaching us, Aguilar finally came to our camp. Some soldiers, returning one day from chasing musk swine, told Cortes that a canoe was approaching. Our captain at once sent Andres de Tapia with a couple of men to find what the news might be, for never before had a canoe come fearlessly towards us. When Tapia saw the seven who landed were Indians, and called to them that they need have no fear, in broken Spanish one cried, "Dios y Santa Maria de Sevilla!" and rushed to Tapia and embraced him. A soldier in Tapia's company promptly ran to Cortes with news that a Spaniard had returned. So much did his countenance look like that of an Indian that, as the seven men passed, many of our men kept asking, "Which is the Spaniard?" Added to the fact that his complexion was naturally brown, he was shorn like an Indian slave. He carried a paddle across his shoulder and had a tattered stocking on one leg and another at his waist, while a loin cloth and ragged cloak covered his nakedness. An old and worn "Book of Hours" he carried folded in a corner of his cloak.

As the seven drew near Cortes, he like the rest of us asked, "Where is the Spaniard?" When Aguilar heard this he squatted on his haunches after the Indian fashion and said, "I am he." Cortes at once gave him a shirt, coat, drawers and shoes from our stores, and asked him to tell how he got to this country. Still in broken Spanish the man told his name — Jeronimo de Aguilar — and how, eight years before, when he and fifteen men and two women were passing from Darien to the island of Santo Domingo, their ship had struck a rock and he and his companions had got into the ship's boat, hoping to make the island of Cuba or Jamaica. But sea currents had carried them to this island. Here the Indians had sacrificed many of his companions, others had died of grief, and the two women, worn out with the labor of grinding corn, of overwork. Aguilar himself the Indians had doomed to sacrifice, but he escaped one night and fled to the cacique from whom we had ransomed him.

This island of Cozumel was, it seemed, a place to which Indians from various parts of Yucatan made pilgrimages for the purpose of sacrificing before some hideous idols which stood in a temple there. The court about this temple we saw one morning crowded with Indians, men and women, burning a resin like our incense. After a while an old Indian, a papa or priest, wearing a long cloak, mounted the steps of the temple and began preaching to the congregation. Cortes asked Melchior to interpret, and when he found that the sermon led to unrighteous deeds, he sent for the papa and the cacique and by the aid of our interpreter told them that if they were to be our brothers they must cast out their idols which would lead their souls to hell. Continuing, he explained to them the good and holy things of our religion, and gave them, to set up, an image of Our Lady and a cross — which would always aid them and make their seeds grow. But still the papa and caciques answered that their forefathers had worshipped their gods because they were good gods, and they did not dare desert them.

Cortes then ordered us to break the idols and throw them down the steps. He commanded also that lime be brought from the town and Indian masons set up an altar. It proved a fair one, and on it we placed the figure of Our Lady. At the same time two of our carpenters made a cross of some timber which lay at hand, and this we placed in a small chapel we built behind the altar. After this a priest of ours, Juan Diaz, said mass in front of the new altar, the papa and all the Indians looking on with greatest attention. Our new-found Aguilar, to whom the caciques showed much friendship when they learned he could speak their language, advised them always to respect and revere the holy image and the cross we had set up, and they would find that they would prove a blessing.

With all our squadron we came, on the 12th of March, to the mouth of the Tabasco, or the Rio de Grijalva, and since we already knew from our experience with Grijalva that no vessel of large size could enter the river, we anchored the larger out at sea, and with the smaller ships and boats carried our men up the river to the point where the palm trees grew. Those of us who had not been with Grijalva were greatly astonished to see the thickets along the river bank swarming with Indians. Besides these, to attack us more than twelve thousand warriors had assembled in Tabasco — the town being a chief town with others subject to it. The reason they were making ready for war was that the people of Chanpoton and other towns of that neighborhood looked upon the Tabascans as cowards for having given their gold trinkets to Grijalva the year before, and they told them they had been too lily-livered to attack us, though they had more warriors than the people of Chanpoton, who had fought us and killed fifty-six of our men. Such taunts as these led the Tabascans to take up arms against us.

Through our interpreter, Aguilar, Cortes asked some Indians who were passing in a canoe what all this disturbance meant, and he added that we had not come to do them harm, but to treat them like brothers and share our things with them; we prayed them, therefore, not to begin a war they would regret. The more Aguilar talked, however, the more insolent the natives became, saying they had fortified their town with log barriers and stockades, that they would not permit us to take in fresh water and, if we passed beyond the palm trees, they should kill us. When Cortes found he could not have peace, he commanded the small vessels and boats made ready for battle, with three cannon and divisions of crossbowmen and musketeers in each boat.

Early next morning, after we had armed ourselves and said our prayers, Cortes ordered Alonzo de Avila with one hundred soldiers, among whom were ten crossbowmen, to go by a narrow path leading to the town, and as soon as they heard the firing of guns to attack the town on one side while we attacked on the other, Cortes himself at the same time moving up the river with the rest in boats and the small ships.

Meanwhile banks and thickets filled with warriors who were armed with their various weapons and making a horrible din by blowing their twisted shells and fifes and beating drums. Since Cortes wished to follow exact form in all he did, he now called us to halt and once more, through Aguilar, the king's notary witnessing, he asked the Indians to permit us peaceably to take in fresh water, and speak to them of God and the king; and he added that if they attacked us, and we defending ourselves killed any of them, the guilt would be on their heads, not on ours.

For answer they shot their arrows off so quickly, drums signaling other troops should attack us, that many of us were at once wounded. Much mud and swamp was before us and we could not easily defend ourselves from arrows and lances. Cortes himself in the contest left one shoe in the mire. But by hard work we finally got to dry land, and with the cry of "Santiago" * fell so furiously upon our assailants that they retreated behind their log walls. Stoutly fighting our way we forced a passage into the town, and then through the streets to fresh defences they had built. Alonzo de Avila and his troops, who had been detained by the swamps, came up at this juncture, and our united forces now drove the Indians from their stronghold. Like the brave warriors they were, however, they kept shooting arrows and darts hardened by fire, and they did not turn their backs until we had gained a large courtyard with rooms, halls and three temples adjoining.

Here Cortes ordered us to halt and take formal possession of the land in the name of the king of Spain. The way he did this was by drawing his sword and as sign of possession making three deep

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* St. Jacob, or James.

cuts in a huge silk-cotton * tree which stood in the courtyard, and crying at the same time that if any should dispute it he would defend the possession of this country with sword and shield. Thereupon all of us present cried out that he did right in taking possession in the king's name and we would aid him in defence of the right. Of our number followers of Diego Velasquez alone found fault, and that because the governor's name was not included in the act.

In this attack the Indians had wounded fourteen of our men (I being one who had got an arrow in the thigh), and in the water we found eighteen of their dead. With sentinels posted we slept in the courtyard that night. The next morning, when Cortes wished to use as interpreter the Indian we had taken and taught and named Melchior in baptism, he was nowhere to be found. We conjectured that he had run off the night before with the people of Tabasco, because we found his Spanish clothes hanging in a tree in the palm grove. So in fact it proved, for that day, when two of our chief officers went out with companies to explore the country, vast numbers of Indians fell upon them and killed and wounded a few of our men. One of the prisoners of that day, when

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* The Bombax Ceiba grows to gigantic proportions in tropical America, sometimes sending to a height of one hundred feet a column-like shaft twenty-five to thirty feet in circumference, and then throwing out many horizontal branches.

Aguilar asked him what madness led them to attack us, told us that Melchior had come to their camp the night before and counseled them to fall upon us and fight us night and day, for, he said, we were so few in number that they in the end would conquer.

As soon as Cortes was sure that the Indians would renew their war upon us, he ordered all our horses brought ashore, and every one of us, the wounded not excepted, to have our arms ready for use. When the horses now stepped on land they were very stiff and full of fear, they had been so long on shipboard; but by the next day they had got back their old liveliness. The gentlemen who, with Cortes at their head, were to fight on horseback were thirteen in number. Mesa had charge of the artillery and Diego de Ordas of us footsoldiers.

We formed in order under our ensign early next day and marched towards some bean fields, where the Indians had attacked our exploring parties. On account of bogs, which our horsemen could not pass, Cortes took a roundabout course. Our other troops, under Diego de Ordas as I said, came up with the Indians near a town while they were moving forward in search of us. They had their faces painted white and black, they wore quilted cotton cuirasses about their bodies and bunches of feathers on their heads, and they carried huge bows and arrows, lances, shields and broadswords. Among them were slingers of stones and fire-hardened javelins. Their number was so vast that they covered the bean fields, and they rushed on us like infuriated dogs. So swift and impetuous was their onset, and such a cloud of arrows, stones and javelins did they send, that they wounded seventy of our men in a few seconds. However, with our muskets and crossbows we did not fail to show we could fight, and we cut right and left with our swords. We forced them to give ground a little, and Mesa with the cannon's aid made terrible havoc with their close ranks. But even then we could not put them to flight.

I shall never forget the yelling and whistling they set up at every shot we fired, the terrible noise of their drums and trumpets and their war-whoop, " Alala! alala!" and how they sought to hide their losses by throwing dust and rubbish in the air. I now said to Diego de Ordas that it seemed to me we should charge the enemy, my reason being that I saw they were retreating from fear of our swords; but Ordas answered that my advice was poor, for there were three hundred of the Indians to every one of us. My idea, however, was at length carried out, and we fell on them so heavily with our swords that they retired a short way.

Just at this time Cortes came galloping up with the horse. They had been delayed by the bogs. When we, who were in hot pursuit, espied our cavalry, we attacked with renewed energy. The Indians, busily fighting us toward their faces, did not see our horsemen dashing on them from behind, spearing them in their fine and rapid galloping and finally forcing them to face about. They had never seen a horse before, and could not think other than that our good riders and their powerful, fiery animals were one body. Astounded at so strange a sight, they took to flight.

Under trees which stood on the field of battle we then thanked God with uplifted hands for giving us so complete a victory. After this we rested and bandaged the wounds of our men and buried the two who had been killed, one shot in the neck and the other in the ear. Our fighting had lasted about an hour and over eight hundred of the Indians lay dead on the battle field, and others wounded.

In an account of this battle a historian, Gomara, says that before the coming of Cortes the holy apostles Santiago and San Pedro galloped up to our aid on a grey horse. I say that for the work of our arms and our victory we stand indebted to our Lord, and that in this battle every man of us was set upon by so many of the enemy that if each had merely thrown a handful of dust upon us, we should, but for the mercy of God, have been buried. It may be that the two glorious apostles, Santiago and San Pedro, did come to our assistance. Perhaps on account of my sins I was not worthy to behold them. What I, Bernal Diaz, saw was Francisco de Morla on a chestnut horse coming up with Cortes, and even now, at this very moment, while I am writing this, I can see again all the battle passing before my eyes, just as I relate it; and although I am a sinner not worthy of beholding one of the glorious apostles face to face, yet I never heard any of the other four hundred soldiers, nor Cortes himself, talk of this wonder. To confirm its truth we would have built a church when the town was founded, and named it Santiago de la Victoria, or San Pedro de la Victoria. If what the historian relates were true, then we must have been bad Christians when the Lord sent us aid in the person of his sainted apostles not to show respectful recognition of his great favor, and thank him daily in a church. I should have great joy if it were as the historian relates, but I must confess I never heard of this wonder until I read of it in his book, nor have I ever heard any of the conquistadores who were present at the battle speak of it.

We took five prisoners, among them two caciques. After Aguilar had spoken with them he thought they might serve as messengers to their countrymen, and having advised Cortes to free them and give them glass beads, he told them the battle had been of their own seeking, that we wished to treat them as brothers, and that they had better gather all the caciques of different towns for a conference of good will. They went off with great good feeling, and when they had told the chiefs of our wish to be friends, they at once sent us fifteen Indian slaves with fowls, baked fish and maize bread. Cortes received the slaves graciously, but Aguilar, on the contrary, asked angrily why they had come with blackened faces and ragged cloaks; if they wished peace, he told them, chieftains, not slaves, must come and treat. We, however, presented the black faces with beads in token of our good will and to soothe their feelings.

And sure enough, the very next day, above thirty of the chief Indians, well clad, brought offerings of food, and begged leave to burn and bury their brethren who had fallen in the battle, so that their bodies might not befoul the air or be eaten by lions and tigers. When Cortes granted their wish, they hastened to bring many Indians to care for the bodies according to their custom. They said, moreover, they durst not begin treaty with us, for the next day caciques of all the towns would gather to consider our offer of peace.

In due time forty chiefs arrived, each bearing himself well and wearing a cloak richly wrought after their fashion. They saluted Cortes and all of us, incensed us with a resin they brought, and begging us to pardon their errors promised their friendship for the future. In return Cortes gravely reminded them, through Aguilar, our interpreter, how often he had wished to make peace; how we were vassals of a great king, Don Carlos, who had sent us to help and favor those who would enter his service, and if they were peacefully disposed, as they said, we would help them; but if they were not, we were on the point of destroying them and all their people, and some of the tepustles (they called iron tepustle) would fly out and kill them, for the tepustles were still angry because of the attack they made on us. At this moment Cortes gave signal for firing our largest cannon. The report came like a thunder clap, and we could hear the ball whizzing over the hills, for it was midday and not a breath of air stirring. The caciques were terrified, and believed all Cortes had said — who then told Aguilar to assure them that he had ordered that no harm should befall them. Cortes and the chiefs now fell into a long and lively talk, and in the end they left, telling us they would come next day and bring a present.

They did come — the caciques of the Tabasco region — and paying reverence to us all, presented four gold diadems, some gold lizards, earrings, ducks, figures like dogs and masks with Indian faces, two sandals with soles of gold and other things of small value; also cloaks such as Indians wear. When Cortes asked them where they got their gold and trinkets, they answered from the country towards the setting sun, and said, "Colua" and "Mexico"— at that time we still did not know what they meant. But the gold they brought was nothing to the present of twenty women, among them a most excellent lady who became a Christian under the name of Marina.

Cortes received the presents, and by means of Aguilar told them he must further ask that they return to their dwellings and within two days all the people be back again in the town. They at once issued orders to that end. He also said that our Indian Melchior should be brought to him without fail. They answered that he had taken flight when the battle turned against them. This, however, was not true, for we learned that because his counsel cost them so dear they had slain the poor creature in sacrifice.

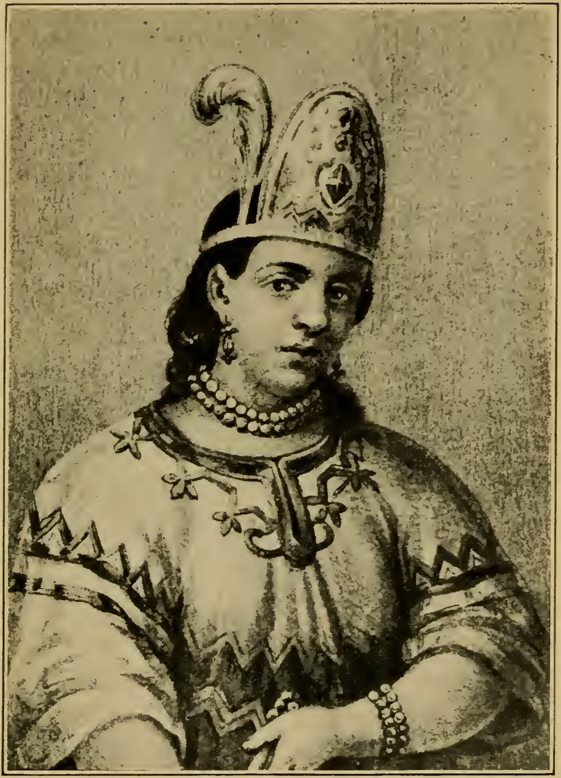
With the same readiness they had showed in recalling their families they promised to do away with their idols and human sacrifices. When Cortes told them, as well as he could, about our holy Christian faith, how we worshipped one God, and when he explained, showing them an image of Our Lady with her blessed Son in her arms, how we paid reverence to this figure, the caciques said they liked the looks of this great teleciguata (which in their language means a woman of distinction) and that they would much like to keep her in their town. Cortes promised they should have the image and told them to build a good altar for it. This they did at once, and two of our carpenters made a high cross.

When the image of Our Lady and the cross were set up on the altar we all paid our reverence there, and Padre Fray Bartolome de Olmedo said mass, the caciques being present, and we gave the name of Santa Maria de la Victoria to the town of Tabasco. With the aid of Aguilar, the friar also spoke many excellent things about our blessed religion to the twenty women, telling them not to believe in, and no longer offer sacrifices to, their idols, but to worship and adore the Lord. At once they were baptized. I can not now call to mind their names, but one was Donna Marina, a woman of distinction in bearing, good looking, intelligent and born a ruler over towns and peoples. How she came to be in such a condition happened in this wise:

Her father and mother were caciques of a town which held other towns subject. When she was still a little girl her father died and her mother married another cacique. Later a son was born, and the father and mother had so great affection for the younger child, and so wished to have him succeed after their death to their honors, that they secretly, in night-time, gave the little girl to some natives living at a distance, and then spread the rumor that she had died; which report gained further credit from the fact that a daughter of one of their slaves did die at the time, and they published that the dead girl was their daughter and heir. The Indians to whom they gave the girl did not keep her, but passed her to the people of Tabasco, and they, as we see, to Cortes.

In our conquest of New Spain this woman was a most valuable help. Through her only, under the protection of God, did we accomplish many things. Without her we never should have understood the Mexican language. She knew the language common to Mexico and the language of Tabasco. Aguilar merely understood the language of Yucatan. Donna Marina, therefore, would first make facts understood to Aguilar, who would translate what she said into Spanish. It came to pass that she had the most extensive influence in New Spain and did with the Indians what she pleased.

The five days we stayed in this place, partly to cure our wounds, Cortes used to draw the caciques to him by kindly talks, telling them of our king and the advantage they would gain in obedience to him, and, as to the future, whatever might be their needs, if they would let him know, no matter where he might be, he would come to their aid. For this promise the caciques — the first of the peoples of New Spain to submit to his power — thanked him and solemnly declared themselves vassals of our great emperor.



Donna Marina had a most extensive influence in New Spain, and the Indians obeyed her without question.

The next day was Palm Sunday and, as Cortes had ordered, all the chiefs with their wives and children came to the courtyard where we had set up the altar and cross and had cut palm branches to carry in our procession. Here the Indians stood looking on while Cortes with officers and all our men marched in reverence, and two of our priests, in full canonicals, said mass and we prayed before and kissed the cross. The caciques drew nearer after this ceremony and offered Cortes ten fowls, baked fish and all kinds of greens, and he commended to their care the image of Our Lady and the cross, adding that if they kept the chapel clean, and the cross decked with garlands, they would then have the blessings of health and plentiful harvests.

CHAPTER V

Of reaching San Juan de Ulua, and what Montezuma did for and against us.

MONDAY morning we set sail, and, keeping close to the shore, steered for San Juan de Ulua. As we sped along in the fine weather those of us who had been with Grijalva and knew the coast would point out to Cortes such places as Tonala, which we called San Antonio, and further on the great river of Coatzacoalcos, and still further the lofty, snow-crested mountains, and then those of San Martin. We showed him, too, the river Alvarado, and after we made further way the Banderas, where we had gained the sixteen thousand dollars in barter, and the Island of the Sacrifices, where we found the Indian victims, and at last, with all our fleet, we came to San Juan de Ulua a little after midday on Thursday.

Our pilot, having been there with Grijalva, remembered the harbor and brought our ships to anchor where they would be safe from northers. We had scarcely lain half an hour when Indians in two canoes made straight for our flagship, and climbing aboard asked for the tlatoan, which in their tongue means chief. When Donna Marina understood their question and pointed to Cortes, the Indians turned and paid him respect after the Indian fashion and bade him welcome. Their master, they said, served the great Montezuma and had sent them to learn what sort of men we were and what we came to their country to seek, and if we would tell them what need our ships had, they would provide for it.

Through our two interpreters, Donna Marina and Aguilar, Cortes thanked them for their kindness and offered them food and blue glass beads, and after they had eaten he told them we had come to get acquainted and open up trade with them, and our coming should cause them no anxiety for we had no intention of doing them injury. Upon this the Indians returned well content to shore. The next day we disembarked horses and guns, and our artilleryman, Mesa, placed our guns in most favorable position on the sand dunes. We set up an altar also, and built huts for Cortes and the officers and three hundred of the soldiers, many Indians helping, for the next day they came and with their axes dressed the wood used for the huts, adding large cloths to spread over the roofs to keep out the heat, which was already great. They also brought plums, nice and ripe, fowls and maize bread, and gold trinkets, which Cortes joyfully received and gave in turn toys, with which they were uncommonly pleased. They said their governing cacique would come next day and bring more food.

On Easter the governing cacique did appear. His name was Teuhtlilli, a man of large affairs, and with him was another chief. Numbers of Indians bearing presents of fowls and greens followed, but Teuhtlilli told these to stand back while he walked towards Cortes and, after the Indian custom, made him three reverential bows, which he repeated to us who stood nearest. Cortes, embracing both caciques, bade them welcome and asked them to wait a little. Meanwhile he ordered the altar to be trimmed and our men assembled for service before it. Both caciques looked on and afterwards dined with Cortes and several officers.

When the tables had been cleared, Cortes, aided by our two interpreters, Donna Marina and Aguilar, explained to the Mexicans that we were Christian subjects of the most powerful ruler on earth, who had commanded us to come to this country because he had heard of the great cacique who governed it; that for himself, Cortes wished to be their monarch's friend, and he had many things to disclose, which, when he heard, would delight him; with friendly understanding he wished to trade, too, and he wanted to know where their mighty monarch lived so that he might meet and confer with him.

To this Teuhtlilli answered with pride, " Since you have just arrived, it would be more fitting, before you say you wish to meet him, that you accept this present we have brought you in our monarch's name, and then tell me what you wish." Saying this he took from a chest many gold trinkets, beautifully and skilfully wrought, besides packages of white cloth made of cotton and worked with feathers, and many other things; and he also added quantities of turkeys, baked fish and fruit.

Cortes accepted all with gracious smiles and gave in return glass beads and other things we had brought from Spain. And he begged the caciques to tell their people to come and trade with us, for we had beads and other things to exchange for gold. He then had brought an arm-chair, inlaid and carved, some twisted glass beads, a necklace of imitation pearls, a scarlet cap with a medal representing Saint George on horseback and slaying the dragon, and he told Teuhtlilli that he presented the chair to the great Montezuma so that he, Cortes, might sit in it when he visited him, and the cap was for his wear, but that all the other things were presents from our mighty king to their monarch, and that now he should tell us where and when he, Cortes, might see him. Teuhtlilli, accepting the presents, said his master was so powerful a monarch that he would be pleased to know our king, and he would carry the present to him at once and bring back answer.

With him Teuhtlilli brought very clever painters, such as they had in Mexico, and to show the great Montezuma what we were like he commanded the painters to picture true to facts Cortes and all the chief officers, the soldiers, also, and the ships and horses, Donna Marina and Aguilar, even our two dogs, the cannon and balls — in short, everything they saw belonging to us. Alvarado and other horsemen, Cortes now advised, should tie bells to their horses and mount and gallop at full speed before the caciques. Our captain himself mounted and said, "It would be a capital thing if we could gallop across these sand dunes, but they would see that we stick in the sand. When the tide is low let us go out to the beach and gallop two by two." Alvarado led on his spirited and very swift sorrel mare, while the Mexicans looked on.

Then our gunners loaded the cannon with an unusually heavy charge of powder, so as to give volume of sound when they fired, and Cortes, making as if he would speak to the caciques, took them and a number of chieftains where they might have good view of the firing. The air was very still when the cannon went off, and the stone balls went crashing along the sand dunes and echoes repeated the din. The Indians were terribly startled and ordered their painters to paint that, too, that Montezuma might see.

Then, again, one of our men had a helmet, partly gilt, which Teuhtlilli, who was more intelligent than his comrades, thought, when his eye fell on it, was much like one held in inheritance from their forefathers and now used to adorn the head of their idol, Huitzilopochtli in the city of Mexico. Montezuma, he said, would be uncommonly pleased if he could see that casque. Cortes ordered it given them and said if they would send him the casque full of gold grains he would send it to our great emperor. Upon this Teuhtlilli, protesting his friendship, took leave and said he would speedily return.

This Mexican cacique was not only a statesman, he was a nimble walker, and he went in all haste to Mexico and told the monarch what he had seen and heard, and showed him the pictures which the artists had painted, and also our presents. Montezuma gazed with astonishment and listened with pleasure. But when he saw the helmet, and compared it with that on the idol, Huitzilopochtli, he no longer doubted that we belonged to the race which, his forefathers had prophesied, should some day come and rule their country.

Six or seven days after he had left us, Teuhtlilli returned one morning with more than one hundred Indians heavily laden, and also accompanied by a Mexican cacique, who in face, form and carriage bore so strong a likeness to our commander that

Montezuma had purposely chosen him as ambassador; for, it was said, when Teuhtlilli showed the picture representing Cortes, all the chiefs who were in Montezuma's company declared that it looked exactly like Quintalbor, and that was the name of the ambassador who now came with Teuhtlilli.

When all these people arrived and came before Cortes, they first touched the ground at his feet with the forefinger of the right hand and then raised it to the mouth, and then they incensed him and all standing about him with resin they burnt on pans of clay. Cortes received them most kindly and asked them to sit by his side. Both ambassadors then told him he was most welcome to their country, and after other courteous speeches they set out the presents they had brought, spreading them on cotton cloths laid on mats.

The first present was a round plate, about the size of a cart wheel, of the finest gold and most beautiful workmanship, representing the sun with many sorts of pictures. Those who afterwards weighed it said it was worth more than ten thousand dollars. Another round plate, even larger, was of brilliant silver in imitation of the moon, with rays and other figures on it. This also was of great value. The third present was the helmet filled with grains of pure gold, just as they had got it out of the mines, and this was worth about three thousand dollars; but really it was more to us than ten times that, for it told us there were rich mines in the country. Among the other things were twenty ducks of gold, looking exactly like living birds and beautifully worked, and other figures wrought in shape of lions, tigers, dogs and monkeys, ten gold chains of most splendid workmanship, twelve arrows and a bow with strings, and two staffs five palms long — such as are used by justices, all cast of purest gold. Then there were crests of gold and silver mounted with beautiful green feathers, and fans similarly wrought — in short, such a number of objects that I can not now remember all, and it is useless to try to describe them, for I do not know how to do it. There were alone thirty packages of beautiful cotton cloth of various patterns and inwrought with colored feathers.

When they had presented all this magnificence the ambassadors begged Cortes to accept it in the same friendship in which their monarch gave, and to divide the things among his teules, or gods, and men. Montezuma, they said, was much pleased with the coming of such valiant men as fame of our doings at Tabasco said we were, and he wished to see our great emperor to whom he would send a present of precious stones. But as for Cortes' coming to see him, we should dismiss the thought, for there was no need of such a journey and it would be fraught with dangers.

With thanks for what they had brought, Cortes gave them out of our poverty a glass cup of Florentine make picturing trees and a hunting scene, a couple of holland shirts, some blue glass beads and other trifles, and begged them to go back to the great Montezuma and tell him that we had come from far-away lands, and over vast seas, solely to pay him our respects, and if we should return without doing this, our mighty king would not receive us kindly. He wished, therefore, to go to their monarch, wherever he might be, and himself receive his commands. The ambassadors answered that they would repeat this to their master, but any endeavor after an interview would be fruitless. With their followers the two then set out, while other Indians remained to bring us food from neighboring towns.

CHAPTER VI

How suspicion and dissent arose; how we chose Cortes captain general and chief justice, and founded Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz.

THE Indians who stayed behind to look after our food soon ceased their efforts, and we so suffered from hunger, for our cassava bread had become mouldy and swarmed with weevils, that we should have had nothing to eat if we had not hunted shell fish. Those of the natives who had come freely bringing gold and fowls to barter for our goods, now became shy and reserved. We anxiously awaited the return of the messengers from Mexico.

After some days Teuhtlilli appeared with many followers. They paid us respect by incensing us after their manner, and then they brought forth their presents — ten packages or loads of cloth richly worked with feathers, four chalchihuites (green stones which the Mexicans think most excellent of its kind and hold at greater value than we hold the emerald), and all kinds of gold trinkets of which the gold alone was worth about three thousand dollars. The four rich stones, they said, should be sent to our emperor, for each was of more value than a load of gold. For the rest, they reported that their monarch, Montezuma, had accepted and was pleased with our present, but as to a personal interview between him and Cortes, no more was to be said about it.

Although it was a disappointment to Cortes that his visit should be refused so dryly, still he thanked the messengers, and turning to some of us who were standing near said, "This Montezuma must be a great and rich prince, and some day, God willing, we shall visit him in his palace." "We only wish," the hungry soldiers answered, "that we were living with him now."

All this happened at the hour of Ave Maria, and at the sound of the bell we gathered before a cross set on a sand hill and said our prayers. While we were kneeling Teuhtlilli asked why we so humbled ouselves before that piece of wood. At once Cortes turned to Padre de Olmedo, who was there. "This is a good opportunity, sir," he said, "to tell of our holy religion through our interpreters"; and he proceeded to speak in a manner that would have done credit to a good theologian. First he explained that we were Christians. Then explaining the substance of our belief, he told them that their gods were not good but evil spirits which fled from the presence of the cross. He said much else that was edifying, which the Indians understood and answered that they would relate them to their monarch, Montezuma.

Also, said Cortes, among the great reasons which had led our emperor to send us here, one was to induce them to give up their idols and the stealing of children and the human sacrifice they practised before their idols. He therefore begged them to set up in their towns and temples a cross like this they saw before them, and an image of Our Lady with her most excellent Son in her arms, and our God would bless them. In short, Cortes spoke with admirable feeling and argument which I am not able to report and must therefore leave in my pen.

With Teuhtlilli came many Indians who wished to barter articles of low grade gold. So we set about trading and in this way got means to pay our sailors for catching fish — otherwise we had not food to stay our hunger. Although he was secretly pleased with our barter, Cortes pretended not to see what we were doing till those among us who were friends of Diego Velasquez asked him why he suffered such a thing, that Diego Valesquez did not send the expedition that the soldiers might put gold in their pockets. Moreover, it ought to be proclaimed that no one but Cortes should, for the future, be permitted to barter for metal, and for all gold already in the soldiers' possession every one should render account that the king's fifth might be taken. A treasurer also should be appointed.

In all this Cortes confessed they were right, but after they had chosen a treasurer he showed his real intentions and said with a heavy frown on his brow, "You see, gentlemen, how hard our comrades fare from want of food. To this moment, because the amount of gold was but a trifle, I overlooked their bartering that they might find something to eat. You have wished that the order be issued that there be no more bartering for gold. We have next to see what we shall get to eat."

Now it happened that one fine morning we woke up to find those Indians, who had stayed near us and had brought gold for barter, had secretly left. Later we learned that Montezuma had sent orders forbidding all conversation with Cortes and his company. For he was much attached to his idol-gods, Tezcatlipoca, god of hell, and Huitzilopochtli, god of war, to whom he every day sacrificed young children that the gods might make clear to him what he should do about us. And now they had told him not to listen to Cortes, nor to the message about setting up a cross and image of Our Lady. His plan was, if we would not sail away, to make us prisoners and use some of us to educate children and others for sacrifice.

We now had the reason the Indians left our camp secretly, and expecting daily that they would make war on us, we kept close watch. In these days I with another soldier was stationed at a lookout on the sand hills, when we saw five Indians walking towards us along the beach. Not to alarm the camp needlessly, we allowed them to come up. They approached with smiles, made their salutes after their fashion, and signed that we should take them to our camp. In their underlips they had made large holes in which they wore pieces of stone speckled blue, or thin plates of gold, and holes in their ears were still larger and bore like adornments. They looked quite different in dress from the Mexicans Montezuma had sent to our camp, and when I presented them to Cortes neither Aguilar nor Donna Marina could understand what they said. When Donna Marina asked, however, if there were interpreters among them, two said they understood the Mexican speech, adding that their chief had sent them to bid us welcome and ask who we were and he would be glad to be of use to such brave men as we. They would have come to us before, the interpreters went on, if they had not shunned as villains the people of Colua, that is, the Mexicans, who they knew had been with us and now had left us. These facts taught Cortes a thing of importance, namely, that Montezuma had many enemies. Our captain gave the five men presents and asked them to say to their chief that he would shortly pay him a visit.

I have already said that we were very short of provisions and our cassava bread foul with worms.

Moreover, so many mosquitos swarmed on the sand dunes where we were camped that we could get no sleep because of them. No wonder, then, that those of our number who had Indians in the island of Cuba wished to go home. This was particularly the case with the friends and onhangers of Velasquez. Cortes, observing all this, gave orders that we should go to Quiahuitztlan, a walled town, which one of our exploring ships had seen some miles to the north.

While preparations were making for our start, friends and adherents of Diego Velasquez asked Cortes how we were to make the journey without provisions, seeing it was impossible to go further by sea; that already thirty-five of our soldiers had died from wounds received at Tabasco and from sickness and hunger; that the country we were now in was a large one, its peoples many, and no doubt they would soon attack us. How much better, they said, for us to go back to Cuba and account to Diego Velasquez for the gold he had gained, which was really a large sum when all the precious things Montezuma sent were counted.

Still Cortes answered that he did not think it wise to go back without having seen the country. Up to this time, he said, we had no reason to complain of our ill-luck; rather we should give thanks to God who had everywhere lent us aid; if we had lost men, that always happened in war and hardships. We should explore the country more thoroughly, and we must make shift for the time being to get and eat the maize the Indians had. By such reasonings Cortes seemingly quieted the partisans of Diego Velasquez. But they still held secret meetings and set on foot plans to bring about our return to Cuba.

Cortes on his part was no less active, for he had determined to be appointed captain general. I was drawn into the affair in this wise: One night Puertocarrero and Escalante, in company with Lugo, who was born in the same town with me and to whom I was related, came about midnight to my hut and said, " Bernal Diaz, take your arms and come out. We are making the rounds." I joined them, and when we were at a little distance from my hut they began, " We want to tell you something of greatest importance, but you must keep it secret and see to it that none of the Velasquez clique, who mess with you, find it out. We are of opinion that Cortes is not doing the right thing for us. In Cuba he proclaimed that he was going to found a colony, and now we find he has no power to do so, but only to barter for gold and then go back to Cuba with what we have gained. Now if Cortes does all this, we are ruined men, for Diego Velasquez will act just as he did before, pocket the gold. Think a moment, sir. This is the third time that you have come to this country, spent all you had and risked your life in battle and suffered wounds and hardships — and all for nothing. Such conditions must not go on. We gentlemen, friends of yours and all, count such a number that we must insist that Cortes in the name of our king founds a settlement here, and we make it known to his majesty in Spain. Promise that you will vote with us. You will do a service to God and our king. We have united to elect Cortes our captain general." In return I said I did not think it wise to go back to Cuba and I was quite ready to agree to elect Cortes general and chief justice until the king should order otherwise.

This agreement passed round from soldier to soldier, and the Velasquez clique, who were more in number than we, finally got wind of it. Then they went to Cortes and boldly asked him why he was intriguing to form a settlement in this country and shirking his duty instead of going to Cuba and rendering account to Diego Velasquez. His plottings were useless, they declared, for he had neither men nor supplies, nor any other outlook necessary for founding a settlement. Cortes answered, without a shadow of irritation, that he was quite of their opinion, and he had not the remotest intention of going against the wishes and instructions of Diego Velasquez; and he straightway gave orders that all should embark the next day, each in the ship that brought him.

When those of us who had agreed upon his election heard this, we said that Cortes had deceived us and done wrong, for in Cuba he had proclaimed that he was going to form a settlement, and now it was evident he had come only to trade. We begged of him not to break his word, but to further the greatest service to God and the king and found a colony. The natives, he declared, would never again let us land. But if a settlement were once established, soldiers from all the islands would flock to help us; Diego Velasquez had deceived us when he said he was empowered by the king to found colonies.

At first Cortes refused to comply with our wishes and only after much begging agreed, stipulating that we should make him chief justice and captain general, and, what was worse for us, that a fifth part of the gold which remained after the royal fifth had been subtracted, should fall to him. In the presence of the king's notary, Godoy, we formally gave him these powers, and at once set to work to found a town which we called Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, because we landed on the Friday of the Cross and the country was rich. As soon as the first stone of the town was laid, we appointed mayors and magistrates, with Juan de Escalante as governor.

When they found that we had elected Cortes our captain general and chief justice, the Velasquez clique were so furious that they roundly abused Cortes and those of us who had chosen him. Their anger rose to such a pitch that we feared it would lead them to blows. At this juncture Cortes secretly told Escalante that we should demand the instructions he had received from Velasquez. This Escalante did, and Cortes drew the documents from his waistcoat and handed them to the royal secretary to read. The words, sure enough, were, " As soon as you have bartered for as many things as possible, you shall return." We asked Cortes that these instructions be attached to the deed recording the power we had given.

But even this did not silence the friends and onhangers of Velasquez, for they protested to Cortes that his being chosen captain without their consent was not right, and they did not wish to remain under his orders but to go back to Cuba at once. He answered that he would compel no one to stay, and if any should ask his leave to return he would readily grant it, even if at last he remained alone. This silenced some. But at last certain of the clique refused to obey Cortes, and we were forced to seize their persons, bind them with chains, and hold them prisoners.

An expedition which had gone out to explore the country now returned, every soldier laden with poultry and green things, which, since the people had fled, they had taken from deserted towns. We were overjoyed with having food — for when a man can have plenty to eat he forgets half his hardships. At this time, too, Cortes was so active, doing all in his power to make friends with those of the Velasquez clique, even to presenting them gold, that at last they became his true friends.

CHAPTER VII

Our varying fortunes with the Totonacs of Cempoala and Quiahuitztlan; and of our letters to his majesty the king of Spain.

It was now determined that we should set out for the fortified town, Quiahuitztlan, which I spoke of before. Our ships were at the same time to run into a harbor about four miles from the town. We marched along the coast and to several towns subject to the town of Cempoala, from which came the five Indians we had led to Cortes on the sand dunes. In these smaller towns we found idol-temples stained with blood, and incense pans and other things with which they made their sacrifices. But not an Indian. They had never seen men like us before, nor horses, and had fled through fear. We were forced to go hungry to bed.

Next day we struck inland, towards the west, and now twelve natives, dwellers on the farms where we had slept the night before, came towards us, bringing fowls and maize bread. The food, they said, their cacique had sent for us to eat, and he begged us to visit his town, which was one sun, or one day's march, distant. Cortes sincerely thanked them and we marched on to another town where, a short time before, several human beings had been sacrificed. My readers would be horrified, I know, at hearing the number of Indian women and men we found butchered along every road and in every town we passed, and I shall tell my story further without stopping to mention them.

Very early next morning Cortes sent six of the Indians to the caciques of Cempoala to say that we were approaching. We marched in best order, cannon and all arms ready for use and every man on guard. Not more than three miles from the town twenty Indians met us bearing cones of roses of a most delicious scent and deep red color, and these they gave to Cortes and those of us who were on horseback, adding that their cacique awaited us, but he was so stout he could not himself come to meet us. When Cortes had thanked them we marched into the town and were so astonished that we returned thanks to God for having allowed us to discover so admirable a place. It was larger than we had yet met, and like a luxurious garden. The streets were full of men and women who had gathered to see us. Quarters set apart for us were most comfortable and large enough for all. And the food they gave us and plums and maize cakes were so plentiful, and we were so famished, not having seen so much food all at once for so long, that we called the town Villa Viciosa, or Luxury Town.

After we had finished our dinner the fat cacique sent word to Cortes that he wished to visit him and he shortly arrived with other Indian chiefs, each wearing gold plates set in their lips and richly wrought cloaks. Cortes, receiving them and their presents of gold trinkets and cotton stuffs of small value, told them, through Donna Marina and Aguilar, of his gratitude. He told also of our king, of his commands to us to redress wrongs wherever we came and to punish the bad, and he then added much about our holy religion.

The fat cacique sighed deeply when Cortes had spoken of evil doers, and complained bitterly of Montezuma and the caciques he sent to the provinces as governors, telling how their forces had recently subdued his people and robbed him of all his gold; how because the sway of Montezuma was over so vast a country and so many peoples and armies, he and his people dared not oppose the monarch's orders. Cortes endeavored to console him, in the end saying that he would relieve him of the oppression he suffered, after he could consider the matter thoroughly, but now he was on his way to visit his ships and to set up headquarters at Quiahuitztlan.

We left Cempoala the next morning, and the fat cacique pleased us very much by sending to our aid four hundred Indian porters — such men as carry fifty pounds weight on their backs and march twenty miles with it. Before this we had had to carry our own knapsacks, but now each of us had a man to bear his baggage. Donna Marina and Aguilar told us that by the custom of the country the caciques were bound, in times of peace, to furnish porters to those needing them, and from that time forward, wherever we came, we always demanded such helpers.

Next morning but one we entered the fortified town of Quiahuitztlan, built amid rocks upon a rocky cliff. It would be a difficult town to capture and we, expecting the Indians to oppose us, marched towards it in best order with cannon in front. But when they saw us climbing towards their houses, the people fled and we went to the very midst of the town without meeting a single native. After we had come to the plaza at the top of the fortress where they had their idol-houses, we found a small group dressed in good cloaks. Bearing pans of burning resin, they incensed Cortes and all the soldiers standing near, and begged us to pardon them for not going out to meet us. They had kept out of the way, they said, for fear of us and our horses, and, too, they wanted to know what sort of beings we were; but by night they would see to it that all the people had come back to town.

While Cortes was giving them green glass beads and a few other trifles we had brought from Spain, and was telling them of our religion and our king, as we were constantly doing wherever we came, and while they were bringing us fowls and maize bread, it was announced that the fat cacique of Cempoala was approaching, borne in a litter on the shoulders of Indian chiefs. When he arrived, the fat cacique, together with the chief men of the town, rehearsed to Cortes the cruelties and oppressions they had to suffer, and they spoke with such sighs and sobs that we could not but feel pity. Telling how they had been subdued and in many ways sadly ill-used, they also related how every year their conquerors demanded many of their sons and daughters for sacrifices and to serve in houses and plantations, and how Montezuma's tax collectors carried off their wives and daughters, if they were handsome. This the victors did, they asserted, throughout the Totonac country of over thirty towns.

As well as he could by means of our interpreters, Cortes consoled them and promised he would put an end to such horrors; our king had sent us to their country for that purpose and they should soon see what we would do for their good. This assurance seemed to give them relief, if not wholly to lighten their hearts.

While this discussion was going on Indians came to tell the caciques that five Mexican tax collectors had just arrived. When the chiefs heard the news they fairly turned pale from fright, and leaving Cortes they hastened to receive the Mexicans and to have a room decked with flowers, and food, especially cacao or chocolate, cooked and served.

In reaching the house of the cacique it was necessary for these five Mexicans to go by our quarters, and they affected such arrogance and reserve that they passed us by without a word. They wore richly embroidered cloaks and loin cloths, and their hair was combed till it was quite glossy and tied in a knot on the head. Each carried sweet-scented roses which he was smelling, each also a stick with a hook, and each had an Indian with a fan to keep off the flies. A company of chief men from neighboring towns escorted them to their lodgings.

As soon as they had dined they sent for the fat cacique and other chiefs of the townships and scolded them roundly for speaking and dealing with us. Uttering many threats, they said they should neither have sheltered us nor given us any gold without Montezuma's permission, and now they must pay dearly for what they had done and at once deliver for sacrifice twenty Indians, men and women, so that the god of war would grant them victory over us.

Observing how restless every one seemed, Cortes asked Donna Marina and Aguilar what it was that was happening, and who these strange Indians were.

Donna Marina, understanding fully what had passed, told Cortes. Upon this our captain again consoled the caciques and bade them take courage, for he would punish the Mexicans. They were already aware, he explained, that our king had sent him to chastise evil doers and to permit neither kidnapping nor sacrifice, and this these tax gatherers planned. He would, therefore, make them prisoners until their master, Montezuma, should learn the reason, namely, that they had come to carry into slavery women and children and to do other deeds of violence.

The caciques were thunderstruck. They durst not lay hands on taxgatherers of the mighty Montezuma. But Cortes exhorted them so well that at last they took courage and seized the tax men and securely fastened them by collars to long poles; and one who would not permit them to bind him got a flogging in addition. This done, Cortes commanded the caciques to pay no more obedience and no more tribute to Montezuma — an order not for them alone but for all their friendly and allied towns where, if other tax gatherers came, those also he should make prisoners.

Rumor of this high-handed order spread throughout the country, for the fat cacique lost no time in sending messengers to tell the tidings, while the chiefs who had accompanied the tax gatherers hastened home with the astounding news. Deeds so marvellous and of such weight in their life could not have been done by mere men, they said to one another, but only by teules, which word means in their tongue, either gods or demons. From that time onward they called us teules; and I beg the reader to bear in mind that when I may use the word in my story, in affairs connected with our conquest, I refer to us, the Spaniards.

The caciques were of the opinion that we should sacrifice the prisoners that they might not go back to Mexico and tell what we had done. This Cortes forbade, however, and set soldiers on guard; and about midnight he called these guards to him and said, " Free the two most active and intelligent of the prisoners, and bring them to my lodgings. But do this in such a way that the Indians of the town know nothing about it."

When the prisoners stood before him, as if he did not know that they were Mexicans, our captain asked them what country they came from and why they were prisoners. They answered that the cacique of Cempoala aided by ourselves had seized their persons. Cortes, however, assured them that he knew nothing of the whole matter and regretted it, and having had food brought them and talking in kindly fashion, he told them to return at once to their lord Montezuma and tell him we were his sincere friends. Harm might come to them, he added, and so he had taken them from prison and would severely reprimand the caciques for seizing them. Moreover, any service he could do them he would gladly undertake, and he would free and protect their comrades; now, however, was the time for them to hasten lest they be retaken and killed. Thankful for their liberty, the prisoners said they feared they might fall into their enemies' hands. Therefore Cortes sent six sailors to take them to a boat and set them on friendly soil beyond the Cempoala territory.

When daylight came and the caciques found two prisoners missing, they were all the more determined to sacrifice the three that remained. This they might have done if Cortes had not feigned anger at the escape of the two, and, ordering a chain brought from the ships, bound the prisoners to it and sent them on board; where he ordered the chain removed.

Caciques of Cempoala, Quiahuitztlan and all the other Totonac chiefs now gathered and told Cortes the dilemma they were in, for Montezuma would soon come down upon them with his vast army and totally destroy their possessions and themselves. Again Cortes replied with cheerful looks that he and his brothers who were here would defend them and any one who dared molest them should forfeit his life. Impressed by this, the caciques, one and all, agreed to stand by us in whatever we ordered them to do, and to join their force to ours against Montezuma and his allies. In the presence of the royal secretary, Godoy, and by formal deed, they pledged obedience to his majesty, our king. Messengers now bore the news to other towns of the province, and when they heard they were no longer to pay tribute and no longer to suffer the robbery of their families for sacrifice, the people were almost out of their senses from excessive joy.

Meanwhile report of what had happened reached Montezuma in Mexico, and he was so angry that he ordered a great army to march against the Totonacs and not leave one alive, while he himself determined to come against us with unnumbered warriors. Just at this moment the two tax gatherers Cortes had freed got back, and when Montezuma learned the promises our captain had sent, the Almighty softened his heart and he resolved to ask what we intended to do. To this end he despatched two young nephews in the charge of caciques of rank, sending with them thanks to Cortes for freeing his tax men and also a present of gold and cloth. On the other hand he made heavy complaints how it was owing to our protection that the Totonac people had revolted. In our persons, he said, he recognized those who, his ancestors had foretold, were coming to his country; we must therefore be of his own lineage, but how did it happen we were uniting with traitors?

Cortes embraced the messengers and accepted their presents, which were worth about two thousand dollars; and averring that he and all of us were good friends of Montezuma, declared that in such a spirit he still kept guard over the three tax gatherers — whom he sent for from the ships and delivered at once. As to the complaint about the people not paying tribute, they could not serve two masters at once, and they had, during our stay, sworn allegiance to our king; but for the rest, we were on our way to visit him and when we were once there we could in friendly talk arrange these matters. After this conversation Cortes presented the two young men with blue and green glass beads, and paid every honor to the old caciques; for instance, he had Alvarado and other good riders mount their horses and gallop and manœuvre before them in a neighboring meadow. So the caciques went back to Mexico highly gratified.

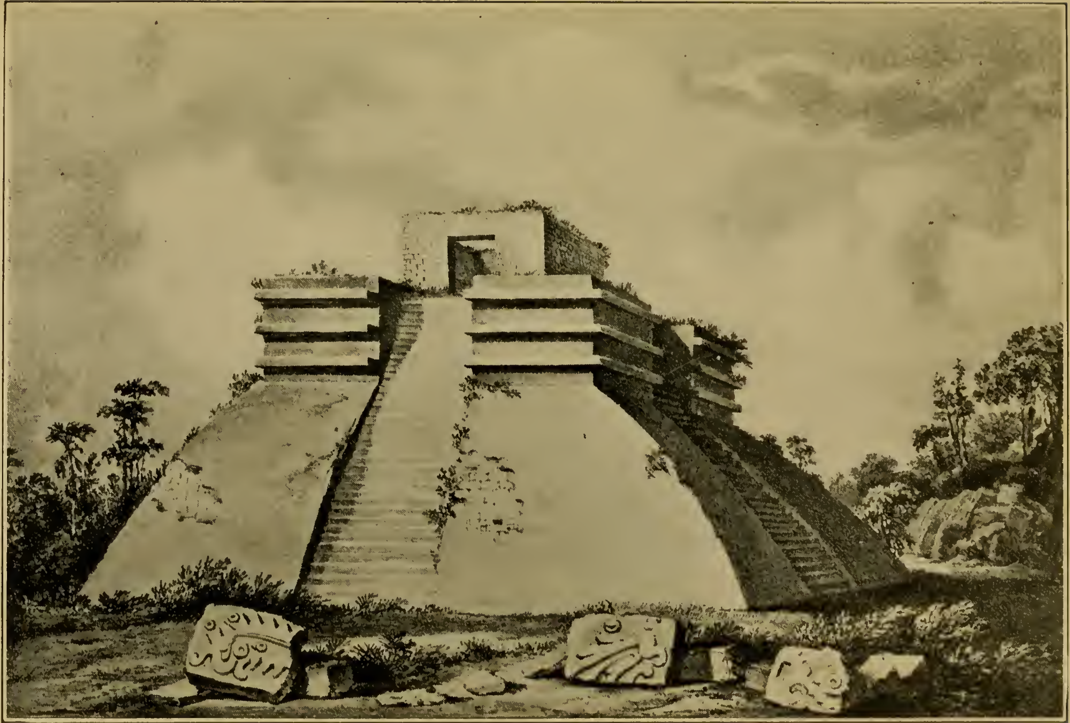
This had its effect on our allies in the mountains and the people of Cempoala who had stood in such awe of the Mexicans. For when they saw kinsmen of the great Montezuma coming to us, and bearing themselves with marked respect to Cortes and to us all, they were astonished more and more and said to one another that we clearly must be teules, for Montezuma himself stood in fear of us and sent us presents of gold. This reasoning of theirs vastly augmented our power over them. In days following these we made, at the request of the fat cacique, a detour to a fortress town two days' journey, or from thirty-two to thirty-six miles from Cempoala. As we went forward we found our march a wile of the Cempoalans to get us to avenge upon some Mexican warriors an ancient enmity of theirs. When Cortes learned this we turned about to Cempoala.

The only wish of the Cempoalans now seemed to be that we should remain ever in their country. If we left they feared Montezuma would send an army to their destruction. They therefore proposed to Cortes that, since we were already so close friends, we should also become brothers by marrying daughters of the caciques. To show their earnestness they brought with them eight cacicas, all of them dressed in rich garments of their country, each with a gold collar about her neck and gold rings in her ears, and attended by maids.

Naturally Cortes thanked the chiefs for their very generous wishes. He said, however, that he could not look upon them as brothers until they rid themselves of their monstrous idols and human sacrifices. Then only could we form a permanent and brotherly union with them. Every day, he said, he saw three, four or even five Indians sacrificed, their hearts torn out of their bodies and offered to their idols, their blood smeared over the walls, and their arms and legs cut off and eaten, just as in our country we eat beef bought at the butchers'. All these horrible deeds must end, said Cortes, and then we could be their friends and make them lords over other countries. The caciques and papas answered that it did not seem to them loyal to give up their idols and human sacrifices, for these gods of theirs gave them whatever good they had — good health, good harvests and everything else of which they stood in need.

Cortes and all of us found this answer very unsatisfactory. Their barbarities we could no longer bear to look upon, and we spoke together a long time, Cortes bringing to our minds many good and holy lessons, and saying in conclusion, "We can never accomplish any greater benefit for this people, and for the honor of God, than put out of the way sacrifices before these idols. The people may rise against us; yet even if it costs us our lives, the idols must come to the ground."

The caciques were beside themselves with rage when Cortes told them the idols must come down. They said if we so insulted their idols we should all perish with them. Cortes now lost patience — after what he had already several times told them about sacrifices and that their monsters were liars and deceivers, and he said either they or we must tear them down at once. He added that we were no longer friends, but enemies, and any opposition would cost



Built of stone overspread with cement, this ancient temple of New Spain shows the common form of the pyramid. The larger stairway faced the east.

them their lives. We were all armed, as was our wont.

The Indians turned the question one way and another. They feared Montezuma's power, which might any day fall on them, and they finally answered that they were not worthy to lay hands on the idol-symbols of their gods and they would never give their consent to our doing so; but if we dared to overthrow them they supposed we must.

The words were scarcely out of their mouths before fifty of us were running up the steps of the temple. The idols, horrible to look at and shaped half like men and half great dog, and about the size of young calves, we tore from their foundations and sent them tumbling down and crashing in many pieces.

When the caciques and papas beheld the monsters in fragments on the ground, covering their eyes they set up a howl and prayed their gods to forgive them. The blame was not theirs, they cried, but these teules' whom they dared not attack for fear of Montezuma. This the papas and caciques did, but the warriors among them began flying arrows at us. In so serious a turn we seized the fat cacique and six papas, and Cortes declared that if the attack were not stayed, the seven should forfeit their lives. When at last quiet reigned Cortes ordered the broken idols completely destroyed, whereupon eight papas came out of a house and carried back the fragments and burned them. These priests wore long black cloaks like cassocks that hung down to their feet, and hoods of different sizes. Their hair was matted together with blood and they smelled most offensively. They were the sons of caciques and were forbidden to marry, and they fasted on certain days.

After the idols were out of the way Cortes told the caciques we could now look upon them as true brothers and give them every powerful aid against Montezuma and his Mexicans. He also spoke of our religion and set every Indian mason in town at work cleaning away the blood and plastering over the walls of the temples. This done, he had an altar erected and told the Indians to bring many of their splendid and sweet-scented roses and green leaves, and ever keep the place clean and undefiled. Four of the papas he had shorn of their hair and clothed in clean garments, and named them to look after the place. The very next morning Padre Fray Olmedo held services and incensed the holy image of Our Lady and the sacred cross with the copal of the country. The caciques and others were present. The chief ornament of the service, however, were the eight Indian damsels brought to be made Christians; for after they were instructed about our religion they were baptized.

We now returned to Vera Cruz and set at building the fort. We got it ready for the roof, and then suggested to Cortes that already we had been three months in the country and it was now high time for us to see what the boasted power of this great Montezuma might be, and time to try to make an honest competence for ourselves. But before we started we ought first to send our salutations to our king, and give him account of what had happened since we left Cuba. In this question we also debated whether we should send his majesty all the gold we had bartered for and received in presents.

Answering us, Cortes said our ideas exactly agreed with his own. In the matter of the gold, however, one circumstance made him hesitate, namely, if each man took the portion which fell to his share, there would be too little to send. Our wish was, he and some men good in business said, to send the king a treasure, and as it was our first, it ought to be something valuable. To make it greater, each of us, they thought, ought to give up his share which he had up to that moment made. Upon this the soldiers to a man signed a paper revoking their portion of the gold. The best ship in the fleet, with full supplies of stores and fifteen sailors, we chose to convey the treasure to Spain.

With the ship we agreed also to send letters telling his majesty of our adventures. In that account, drawn up by all the officers and soldiers, we did not omit to state that we had been induced to join the expedition by promises that we should make settlements; how Diego Velasquez had secretly instructed Cortes to trade and not to settle, and how we had compelled Cortes to stay and found a colony. We spoke also of our battles, of our interpreters, of the riches of the country, its extent, its arts, its religion, its people, four of whom we had liberated from a wooden cage where they were being fattened for sacrifice and feast, and whom we sent for his majesty to see. We spoke something of ourselves, too, how we were four hundred and fifty armed men in the midst of warlike tribes. We begged his majesty to show us favor and not confer the command of the country upon crown officers. We feared that the archbishop, whom his majesty had made president of the Council and ruler of the Indies, would give the command to some relation or friend, especially to one Diego Velasquez, governor of Cuba, because he, Velasquez, was always giving the archbishop townships of Indians to get gold out of mines. As his majesty's most faithful servants we begged that he confer the command on Cortes, accompanying this prayer with praise that raised Cortes to the very skies.

After we had finished the letter Cortes begged us to see it, and when he found how true our narrative was, and the great praise we had given him, he was vastly pleased and made us great promises. It were better, however, he said, to make no mention of the fifth part of the gold we had pledged to him, nor to say who were the first discoverers of the country, because, we later learned, in his own account he did not refer to Cordova and Grijalva, but reserved the discovery and the honor and glory of it all to himself. Men were not wanting among us who told him it was our bounden duty to leave nothing untold that had happened.

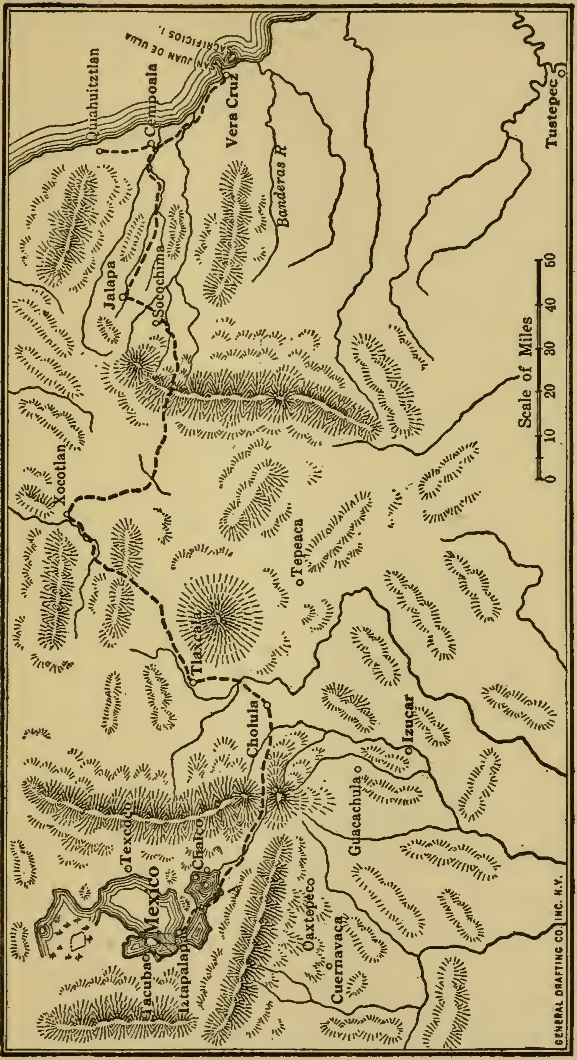
The ship we had prepared sailed on the 26th of July, 1519, and after a prosperous voyage arrived in Spain. Our agents waited at once on the archbishop and handed him our letters and presents, begging him to send them to the king that he might learn everything as it really had taken place. The archbishop, however, received them with harshness and answered their request in haughty tones, at last becoming so incensed that he threw one of them into prison.

CHAPTER VIII

How, having settled to go to Mexico, we destroyed all our ships and marched across the mountains; and how after fierce battles we came to peace with the people of Tlaxcala.

A CONSPIRACY set on foot by the Velasquez faction — a plan to seize a ship and sail away to Cuba — Cortes had now to quell. When he had accomplished this, he ran aground all the ships in order to leave no source of trouble and possibility of further mutiny when we were inland; we who were his friends counselling him not to leave a single ship as source of trouble in port. He then set out for Cempoala, ordering all the soldiers to meet there and receive commands for our march to Mexico. He summoned also the caciques of the mountain tribes in revolt against Montezuma and told them they must ally themselves with us and assist the Spaniards who remained behind in building the church, fortress and houses of Vera Cruz. They readily promised to do what might be asked, and we fitted ourselves for the march.

The best road for us to take, our friends of Cempoala agreed, was through the province of Tlaxcala,


SAN JUAN DE ULUA
SACRIFICIOS I.
Quiahuitztlan
Cempoala
Vera Cruz
Banderas R.
Tustepec
Jalapa
Socochima
Xocotlan
Tepeaca
Tlaxcala
Scale of Miles
0
10
20
30
40
50
Cholula
Izuçar
Guacachula
Texcuco
Mexico
Chalco
Oaxtepeco
Cuernavaca
Iztapalapa
Tlacuba
GENERAL DRAFTING CO. INC. N.Y.

The broken line shows the direction the Spaniards took when they marched from the sea-board to the City of Mexico.

for the Tlaxcalans were their allies and deadly enemies of the Mexicans. Forty Cempoalan warriors had made ready to accompany us — and indeed proved of the greatest service to us on the journey — and the chiefs sent with us as well two hundred porters to convey our cannon. We poor soldiers had no need of help for our baggage, for at that time we had none other than our weapons, with which we marched and slept. We had not even covering for our feet except hempen shoes. But we were always ready for battle.

We broke up quarters at Cempoala about the middle of August, 1519, and set out, keeping strictest order, with scouts and our most active men always in advance. The first day we marched to a town called Jalapa, and from there to Socochima, a place strongly defended by a dangerous approach and having many trained grape vines. In each of the towns our interpreters, Donna Marina and Aguilar, told about our holy religion and how we were subjects of the emperor Don Carlos, who had sent us to put an end to kidnapping and human sacrifices. The people, friends with the Cempoalans and paying no tribute to Montezuma, we found well inclined to us, and they brought us food. In every township we set up a cross and explained its meaning to the people, and what veneration was its due.

Continuing from Socochima we passed a high mountain through a pass and reached Texutla, where again the folk were friendly to us because they refused to pay tribute to Montezuma. After we left this township we finished the ascent of the mountain and came to a wild and rugged region where we had excessive cold, and the very first night rain and hail. Our provisions were all gone and the wind came across the snow hills and chilled us till we shook with cold. No one can wonder we suffered, for we had come suddenly from the climate of Cuba, and the hot coast of Vera Cruz, and in a frost-bound country had nothing with which to cover ourselves. In another pass which we entered we found groups of houses and large temples with huge piles of firewood near for use in the idol-worship. Still there was nothing to eat, and the weather was bitterly cold.

Our march now lay across the land belonging to the town of Xocotlan.* We sent on two Cempoalans to tell the cacique of our coming and gain a favorable reception, but even then we marched in close order and always guardful. The town was subject to Montezuma and everything looked different. Still, we were as much pleased with it as with a Spanish town — its gleaming whitewashed balconies, the dwellings of its caciques, and its lofty temples wholly built of stone and whitened. The chief cacique came to meet us, since our messengers had made known our approach, and he led us to lodgings. He also gave us food; but with bad grace.

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* In Aztec names *x* represents the English sound *sh*.

As soon as we had eaten, Cortes, through our interpreters, asked the cacique all manner of questions about their monarch Montezuma, and we learned much of his strength in warriors stationed in his conquered provinces, and of other armies posted on frontiers. The cacique told also of the strong city of Mexico, how it lay in the midst of waters and one could only pass from house to house by means of bridges or canoes; how all houses had flat roofs and could be turned into fortresses; how the city was entered by three causeways, each with four or five openings spanned by as many bridges, and when any one of these bridges was raised it was impossible to enter the city. Then the cacique told of the stores of silver and gold, the precious stones and great riches of Montezuma.

Cortes and all of us marvelled at hearing how great a lord Montezuma was, but the more the cacique told of the fortress and bridges the more earnestly we longed to try our strength against them. Of such stuff are Spanish soldiers made. Facts later proved Mexico strongly fortified, stronger, indeed, than this cacique told us — you had to see it yourself to form an idea of it, a description can not tell its strength. Our informant added that Montezuma was so powerful he put anything he chose under his power, and he feared he would not be pleased when he heard we had entered and lodged in this township without his permission.

To all this Cortes answered by our interpreters, "You must understand that we have come here from distant lands at the order of our king, Don Carlos, who has many great and powerful princes as his subjects, and he sent us to command your great Montezuma not to kidnap or sacrifice Indians, nor to seize any more lands, but to obey the comands of our king and master. And I declare to you, and the other caciques who are with you, that you must stop human sacrifices, no longer eat the flesh of your relations, and cease all unnatural offences and abominations, for such is the will of the Lord God in whom we believe, whom we adore and from whom come life and death."

One spot in this town I shall never forget. Near a temple I saw piles of human skulls in so regular an order that one could count them. I estimated them at more than one hundred thousand — I repeat, more than one hundred thousand. In another corner of the plaza there were dead men's thigh bones, more than you could count. Besides these, human heads were hanging from beams, and three papas stood guard of these bones and heads. Horrible sights such as this we saw in every town as we got further into the country.

Next morning we set out for Tlaxcala, our scouts marching always in advance, our muskets loaded, the matches lighted, our horsemen in close order, in short, ready for action at a moment's notice. Day and night we were on guard. At the small town of Xalacingo we heard that the whole of Tlaxcala was up in arms — thinking that like the Mexicans we came to plunder. We at once despatched two chiefs of Cempoala to say we hoped they would receive us as friends, for we had come as such. We sent also a fluffy, red Flemish hat and a letter. We knew they could not read the letter, but we thought that when they saw the paper unlike their own they would understand it bore a message. The Tlaxcalans, however, seized and threw into prison our messengers and we waited in vain for their return.

Commending ourselves to God, on the third day we set out for Tlaxcala, and then met our two men, who had got out of their prison by the aid of friends. They were stricken with terror at what they had seen and heard. "Now we are going to kill those you call teules," the Tlaxcalans had said to them. "You shall see whether they are as valiant as you say. And we shall eat their flesh, and your flesh, too." * Say what our delegates might in contradic-

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* "Terrible as such rites may seem to us, it may be taken as certain that they were regarded almost with equanimity by the Mexicans. Death by sacrifice was considered the normal death of a fighting man, and ensured entrance to the paradise of the

tion to this, the Tlaxcalans would not accept the truth.

When Cortes and we others heard these haughty words, and how all Tlaxcala was preparing for war, we did not think it a light matter. Nevertheless we one and all cried, "Since it can not be otherwise, forward! — for good luck!" and unfurling our banner we marched on.

Our only discourse now was how we should attack the enemy. You, the reader, may ask why all these preparations with the foe not yet in sight? I answer by repeating Cortes' own words, "Comrades, you know how few we are in numbers and how it behooves us to be on our guard and each moment ready for the enemy, not only as if we saw them approaching, but as if battle had begun. It sometimes happens that they seize the lances with their hands. For such daring we must be prepared. As to the rest, you do not need my advice, for I have found that you do much better than I am able to tell you."

Heartened by discourse such as this, we marched about eight miles when we came to a fort strongly built of stone, lime and other cement, an entrench-

Sun. Instances occur where men have deliberately demanded death on the sacrificial stone. . . . The very cannibalism which, to a limited extent, formed the occasional sequel to human sacrifice, becomes divested of much of its horror when it is remembered that the rite was, in essentials, an act of communion with the deity, with whom the victim was identified." "Mexican Archæology," by Thomas A. Joyce.

ment so constructed as to make it difficult to capture. We halted to inspect the work and Cortes asked the villagers for what purpose it stood there. They answered that because the great Montezuma was continually warring against the Tlaxcalans, they had built the fort to protect their territory. We rested here, at this entrance to a hostile country, till Cortes cried, " Let us follow our standard bearing the sign of the cross, gentlemen. Through that we shall conquer." To which we one and all returned, " Forward! whatever may happen. In God is our strength! "

Continuing our march cautiously, we had not gone far before our scouts saw about thirty Indian spies, who carried lances, shields, and broad swords edged with flint and sharper than ours of steel, and wore feathers in their hair. Cortes ordered some of our horsemen to try and capture one without wounding him. When the thirty found our horsemen coming towards them and beckoning to them with their hands, they began to retreat slowly and so to mass themselves that our men could not capture one. They also struck at our horses and wounded them, and by this action so heated the blood of our men that they killed five of the thirty. Upon this a swarm of more than three thousand warriors rushed furiously from ambush, pouring a shower of arrows and fire-hardened darts upon our horsemen. Our cannon, which we now fired, forced them to give ground, and they, keeping their ranks, retreated. Four of our men were wounded and seventeen of the foe lay dead. When we had gone into night quarters near a brook we found that they had abandoned their homes at war summons and had carried away the dogs which they breed for food. But in the night the animals escaped and came back to their familiar homes and we caught many. They made a rather good supper.

Next morning, after we had commended ourselves to God in prayer, we set out with each company marching in close order, our horsemen particularly guardful that the foe should not break our ranks and divide our company. And as we marched two armies of warriors, about six thousand men, came up with terrific din of trumpets, drums and yells, flying arrows at us, hurling their darts, and conducting themselves with every show of valor. Cortes now ordered us to halt and he sent forward three prisoners of the day before to say that we came to them as brothers and wished them to stay hostilities. When our three go-betweens began to speak the Indians attacked us the more furiously, so that we could not stand idly waiting. "Santiago!" cried Cortes. "On to them!" and in an instant our firearms answered so sharply that numbers were killed and wounded.

They now retired to some ravines where forty thousand warriors, all wearing his red and white colors, lay in ambush with their general in chief, Xicotenga. The ground of the ravine was uneven and our horsemen were useless in the passage of it, while the enemy plied us with arrows, lances and stones; but when we had gained level ground we paid them back richly. We dared not break our ranks, for the instant any soldier left the formation he was set upon and wounded. Then, too, we had to keep close together in order not to be cut off. We could do little contending with twenty different divisions and completely surrounded. And then the Indians kept constantly trying to blind us by throwing handfuls of sand in our faces. It was pretty hot work.

But shoulder to shoulder we pushed forward and saved ourselves from defeat. One of their objects was to capture one of our horses, and in this they did not fail, for as Pedro de Moron on his well trained mare was charging with three other horsemen, the Indians wrenched the lance out of his hand and gave his mare such a terrific cut with a broadsword that she fell dead. We saved Moron, whom they were dragging away half killed, but the mare we had to let go, cutting her girths in order to save the saddle. They carried her off and afterwards cut her in pieces to show in the towns of Tlaxcala, and we learned that they offered to their idols her shoes, along with the red Flemish hat and the letter we had sent.

We had fought for a good hour. Every man had done his duty. On this second day of September, 1519, we had been in greater jeopardy than ever before, and now as our enemy retreated we could hardly stand from over-fatigue. We gave hearty thanks to God who had delivered us from such peril, and fell back to some temples, which were strong and lofty. Posting patrols and scouts, we dressed the wounds of our men and horses, made a good supper off dogs and poultry and lay down to rest and sleep until morning. We never could discover how many Tlaxcalans we had slain and wounded, for it is their custom to carry any Indian off the field as soon as he is hurt or dead.

The next we made a day of rest, laying in a stock of arrows and repairing our crossbows. Cortes said it would do no harm if our horsemen should gallop up and down the country a little, otherwise the Tlaxcalans might think we had had enough of fighting. Of the Indians we had captured, two we set at liberty to tell the chief of the Tlaxcalans that we merely wished to take the road through their country to Mexico, there to speak with Montezuma. The two went to Xicotenga's camp, and punctually returned with the message that we might go to the town where his father lived, where they would make peace after they had satiated themselves on our flesh and had honored their gods with our hearts and blood. Tired out with battles, we did not relish this haughty answer.

Cortes now made the most careful enquiries about the forces of Xicotenga, and we learned that he had many more troops than when he attacked us before — five chiefs, each commanding ten thousand men. They had brought out their banner and standard — a large white bird like an ostrich, with wings outspread as if on point of flight. Besides this, each cacique had his own particular colors and insignia, just as do our dukes and earls in Spain. We were human beings and feared death, and when we heard these facts, and learned from other Indian captives that they were true, we spent the whole of the night in repenting our sins and in offering fervent prayers that the Almighty would save us from defeat.

Next morning, September 5th, 1519, we equipped ourselves for battle, and we had not gone quarter of a mile when we saw the fields covered with warriors bearing on their heads huge feather crests, waving their colors and making terrific noises with horns and trumpets. The pen that would seek to describe what we here saw would find a difficult task. It was a battle of as fearful and doubtful event as well could be — a plain six miles in breadth swarming with warriors, and in the midst four hundred men, the greater part wounded and knocked up with fatigue; — four hundred men, I say, knowing their foe had marched out to battle with the determination to leave none alive save those they would sacrifice to their idols.

What a shower of arrows and stones they poured upon us! The ground was literally covered with javelins, double-edged and sharp enough to pierce any armor. They fought like very furies, but we used our heavy guns, muskets and crossbows with such effect, and our cavalry in particular bore themselves so valiantly, that they, next the Almighty, were our bulwark. The enemy were themselves so many and so closely crowded, and also part of their forces so divided by quarrels, that at last they lost courage and retreated. Our horsemen followed them but a short distance, for from fatigue they could not sit upon their horses.

When at last we found ourselves free from attack we gave fervent thanks to God. We had lost one soldier killed, but sixty were wounded, as well as all the horses. They gave me two wounds, one on the head with a stone, and one by an arrow piercing my ankle, but neither disabled me for duty and fighting till the end.

Oh! the distress we suffered! We had neither oil nor salt for our wounds. And we had no clothes to shelter us from the sharp winds that blew from the snow mountains and shook us with cold. Lances, crossbows and muskets make poor coverlets. But we slept that night, and more soundly than on the night before, for we had regulated our outposts and patrols.

In the last battle we had taken three Indian caciques. These Cortes sent to the chieftains of Tlaxcala, begging them to make peace and permit our march through their country to Mexico, as we had already asked; that if they would not now come to terms, we would fight till we had slain them all — which would grieve us, for we were well disposed and would gladly believe them brothers.

Our delegates came betimes to the capital of Tlaxcala and gave their message to the caciques, whom they found in council with the elders and papas. Defeat and the death of friends had made them sorrowful, and they were unwilling to listen to our messengers until they had summoned their soothsayers, priests and fortune-tellers and bidden them find from their sorceries and magic spells just what sort of people we were, and if fighting us day and night they could overcome us; and also to tell them what we ate and if we were really teules, that is, gods, as the Cempoalans said.

Upon this the papas and wizards got together in great numbers and began their enchantments, and finally by their arts discovered that we were humans made of flesh and blood, that, as they did, we ate dogs, fowls, bread and fruit, if we could get them, but we did not devour the flesh of those we had slain. The worst things these priests and wizards said of us was that we were very valiant during the day, but became helpless as soon as the sun went down.

This last finding furnished a capital hint to the caciques; and Xicotenga did not fail to draw out ten thousand of his bravest troops and fall upon us by night. They implicitly believed they should capture and sacrifice us to their gods. But silently as they approached, and furiously as they charged, they found us on guard, and we gave them so rough a reception with our muskets and cut them so vigorously with our swords, that they soon turned their backs, our cavalry pursuing by the bright light of the moon.

It was on the following morning that we saw our true condition. Not one among us who had not one, two or three wounds, and all were weakened by fatigue and hardship. Fifty-five of us had died in battle or from disease and the great cold, and Cortes and the Padre de Olmedo were suffering from fever. Naturally we began to think what would be the final outcome of our undertaking. If the Tlaxcalans, whom we thought peacefully minded toward us, could reduce us to such straits, what would become of us when we met the great armies of Montezuma? Plainly among us there were plenty of valiant gentlemen and soldiers who brought wisdom to our councils, whom Cortes always consulted — in fact, he did nothing without first consulting us.

But after a few days, and after the Tlaxcalans had intrigued and made other attacks, the Almighty inclined the hearts of the caciques to make peace with us. Men of theirs of good understanding finally met in one of the chief towns, and when they sat in council an elder of the first rank addressed them, as we afterwards learned, to the following effect: "Brothers and friends, you know how often these teules, who are now in our country and ready to fight, have asked us for peace, saying they have come as brothers to aid us. You know the number of prisoners they have taken and never harmed, but set free. You know how three times we attacked them and failed to conquer. Again they ask us to make peace; and the Cempoalans who are with them assure us that they are enemies of Montezuma and his Mexicans. You well know that the Mexicans have every year for more than one hundred years made war on us, and have completely shut us in our territory so that we dare not go beyond to fetch salt for our food or cotton for our clothes. If any of our people venture beyond our limits, they rarely return alive. The perfidious Mexicans and their allies kill them or make them slaves. Our wizards and papas have told us what they think of these teules; that they are very valiant we know. Let us seek friendship with them. Whether they be men or teules, let us welcome them. Let us send chiefs to their camp with food for them to eat, and offer them peace so that they may aid us against our enemies."

All the caciques hearing this speech approved it, and at once notified their general to stay hostilities. Xicotenga, however, would not listen. He became very angry and cried out he was not for peace, that already he had killed many of the teules and one of their horses, and he would fall on us the next night and kill us all. But the advice of the wise elders finally prevailed, and after some delay ambassadors, clothed in cloaks half red and half white, came to our camp to negotiate peace.

When they reached the quarters of Cortes they incensed him by burning copal before him and paid him other forms of respect, and they said they wished to be admitted to our friendship and do homage to our king; that they had taken up arms against us because they then believed we had been sent by the treachery of Montezuma, but they now were convinced that in alliance with us they might live in security and peace. Cortes with every friendly expression seated them by his side and told them we should in the future look upon them as vassals of our emperor and as our friends, and that we would visit their city at once if it were not for some business we were carrying through with Montezuma.

Ambassadors from Mexico were present during the whole of this interview and heard all the promises made, and when the Tlaxcalans had withdrawn they half laughingly remarked to Cortes that he should not trust such assurances; they were nothing but treacherous tricks, for the Tlaxcalans merely intended, failing to conquer us in open combat, to get us into their town and kill us. Cortes told the ambassadors that he was not troubling himself about the Tlaxcalan intentions; and when the Mexicans found him thus determined they begged him to wait six days in our camp that they might send messengers to Montezuma. Faithful to their word, within six days six Mexican chief men arrived from the great city with a rich present of gold trinkets wrought in various shapes and two hundred pieces of cotton cloth interwoven with feathers. When they offered these to Cortes they told him Montezuma was delighted to hear of our success, but he prayed him most earnestly not to go with the people of Tlaxcala to their town, and on the whole not to trust them, for they were merely wishing to rob us of our gold and cloth and were themselves so poor they did not have a single decent cotton cloak.

At this very moment delegates arrived from Tlaxcala saying all the old caciques of the town were coming to conduct us to their quarters, for finding we did not come, they determined to seek after us, and so they had set out, some in litters, some on foot. When they had come before Cortes and had done their ceremonies of respect, our captain said he thanked them for the food they had continually been sending and for other deeds, and the sole reason he had not visited their city was that he had not any one to move the tepuzques, as they termed our cannon. " Was it nothing but that! " they cried. " And you could not tell us! " and in less than half an hour five hundred porters were on the spot and early next day we were marching towards their town.

CHAPTER IX

Telling how kind the Tlaxcalans were, and what happened to us afterwards at Cholula; and also in what an adventure the clever Donna Marina found herself.

We had come barely within a mile of Tlaxcala when the caciques came out to meet us, accompanied by their families and many of their leading people. Members of the five tribes of Tlaxcala, flocking in from all parts of the country, wore their different dresses, which, for want of cotton, they made of henequen, hemp from the aloe, and very neatly and prettily painted. Next the caciques came the papas, of whom there were great numbers, carrying pans of glowing embers and incensing us. Some of them had on long white cloaks, after the fashion of surplices, and hoods like those worn by our canon, and their hair was long and matted so that it could not be parted or ordered, and it was besmeared with blood which oozed from their ears, for they had cut their ears by way of sacrifice. Their finger-nails were very long, and in token of humility they lowered their heads when they approached us. These men were greatly revered for their religion.

The caciques now gathered round Cortes and formed a guard of honor, and when we entered the town happy-faced men and women were so many they could scarcely find room on the streets and balconies. They brought baskets of sweet-scented roses and gave them to Cortes and other soldiers they thought officers, particularly to those who were on horseback. Under such circumstance we came to spacious courtyards where were our quarters — which they had trimmed with green boughs — and where the two elder caciques took Cortes by the hand and led him to his lodgings. For each of us they had made a bed of dried grass and spread with sheets of hennequen. Our friends from Cempoala lodged near us and Cortes asked that the ambassadors from Montezuma might also be close by.

Good will and friendly feeling we soon saw in every one, and the officer whose duty it was to post sentinels told Cortes that the people were so peaceful we did not need our usual watchfulness. "That may be true," answered Cortes, "but we will not give up that very good old habit of ours. Better to be on guard, just as if we expected attack any moment. Many a captain has lost through carelessness and overconfidence." Especially the two chief caciques felt hurt by our military precautions, and said to Cortes, through our interpreters, "You have no confidence in us, Malinche.* You order your men to patrol exactly as you did when you attacked our lines, and we believe you do this because the Mexicans, wishing to estrange you and us, have whispered in your ears fears that we prove treacherous. Ask for as many hostages as you like, Malinche, and you shall have them."

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* The tribes through whose territory the conquistadores passed

Cortes and all of us were moved by the kindness and grace with which the old men spoke, and our captain answered that he wanted no hostages, he knew their good will, but to be on guard was always a custom of ours. At this moment other chiefs arrived with supplies of fowls, maize bread, prickly pears and vegetables. Indeed we had everything in abundance during the whole of the twenty days we lay in the town.

One of those days Cortes took the two elder chiefs aside and questioned them intimately about affairs in Mexico. Montezuma, they assured him, could march one hundred and fifty thousand men from his capital to the field when he wished to capture a city. Besides these he kept strong garrisons in all the provinces. He was such a powerful and rich prince that he had everything he desired, and forced all his provinces to pay him tribute of gold, silver, feathers, precious stones, cotton cloths and men and women

so named Cortes because the interpreter, Donna Marina, was always by him when ambassadors arrived and interpreted for both parties. They therefore called him Marina's captain, or for short, Malinche.

for sacrifice and slaves. The houses in which he dwelt were stored with riches which he had seized by force. In short, all the wealth of the country was in his hands. Of his capital city and its causeways, its houses and bridges, they told us as we had already heard; and also of an aqueduct carrying sweet water from springs of Chapultepec, about two miles from the town, and reaching a place in the city from which porters carried it in canoes and sold it to the people.

These two caciques told also about the arms of the Mexicans — two-pronged lances which go through any cuirass; bows and arrows, with which they are excellent shot; javelins * with flint edges as sharp as knives; and stone-edged, two-handed swords; and rounded stones for which they had many slingers.

Because we had heard about all the caciques were telling, we changed the subject to another more profound, and the caciques told of a tradition they had from their forefathers — how one of their gods, to whom they paid great honors, had told them that in a time to come, from the direction of the rising of the sun, a people should come and rule over them. If we were these people, the kind old caciques said,

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*The main weapon of Mexico, "a short spear made of hard and elastic canewood, whose point, shaped after the manner of the well-known arrow-head, was mostly of flint, of obsidian, and perhaps occasionally of copper." A. F. A. Bandelier.

they rejoiced, for we were both brave and good. At this account we were all astonished and said to one another, " Can what they tell us be true?" But at once our captain answered, " We do indeed come from the rising of the sun, and our master, the king, has purposely sent us to become your brothers. May God give us grace to save you from eternal death." To which we all answered, " Amen."

At last one morning we broke quarters and marched for Cholula, on guard and in best possible order, as whenever we thought attacks possible. But envoys from the caciques of Cholula met and bade us welcome to their territory, and within a short distance of the town the caciques, papas and a number of Indians came out to meet us. When we made our entry the people crowded the streets and housetops to gaze on us. And who can wonder? Never had they seen men like ourselves, nor any horses. We marched to our quarters, in which we found plenty of room, and to which they at once brought us abundance of good food. The city lay in a plain, a land bearing maize and vegetables and the maguey from which the people ferment a wine. And they also make a very good pottery of white, black and red clay, and supply all Mexico and its provinces.

They certainly meant well and honestly the splendid reception they gave us. All seemed in profound peace, and they furnished regular and plentiful supplies. The third day, however, a change came over them. They neither brought us anything to eat nor did any cacique or papa appear, and if any Indians from curiosity came to gaze at us, they smiled mockingly. Our captain seeing this, told our interpreters, Donna Marina and Aguilar, to tell the ambassadors of Montezuma, still in our company, that they must order the caciques to send us food. Wood and water now reached us, but the old men who brought it said that in all Cholula there was no more maize.

That very day, also, other ambassadors arrived from Montezuma, joining those staying with us, and they said in impudent tones that their monarch sent them to say we should not come to his city, for he could not give us food; and, moreover, they were in a hurry to go back to Mexico with our answer. As soon as Cortes saw the unfriendliness their speech implied, he answered in most courteous manner that he marvelled how so great a ruler as Montezuma should so often change his mind, and he begged them not to return to Mexico, for he himself thought of starting the very next day.

As soon as the conference was ended Cortes called us together and told us, "These people are very much set against us, and we must be particularly on our guard." He then sent to the chief cacique, telling him if he could not himself come to send some other chief. In answer the cacique said that he himself was ill and no other could come. When our captain heard this, he ordered us to bring to him, with every respect to their person, two papas from a large temple near our quarters. To each papa he gave a chalchihuite, a stone, I have said, held by them as valuable as emeralds are by us, and he asked in most kindly way why they no longer came to see us, though we invited them. One of these priests had a superior rank, like that of a bishop, for he had charge or command of all the temples in the city and the people held him in great veneration, and he in answer stated that the papas had no fear of us, and if the caciques would not come he would go himself and call them, adding that if he spoke to them, he believed they would come at once.

Cortes accordingly desired him to go and the other papa would await his return. It was not long before the papa reappeared, bringing with him the chief cacique and other men. Why, Cortes proceeded to ask, did they no longer send us anything to eat? If our stay in their town had proved burdensome, we would leave the very next morning for Mexico — they had merely to provide us porters for our baggage and tepusques (cannon), and send us food. The cacique was now so embarrassed that he scarcely could speak, but at length he found voice to say they would send the provisions we wanted, although their lord, Montezuma, had commanded them to with-hold all food and not permit us to go further toward his great city.

While this conference was going on, three of our Cempoalan friends came in and secretly told Cortes that in the streets close by their quarters they had found deep holes, so covered over with wood and earth that without careful inspection they would not be noticed; and that they had had the curiosity to remove the earth from off one of the holes and had found pointed stakes sticking up from the bottom, no doubt set there to wound our horses when they fell into the holes. Moreover, the housetops had breastworks of burnt bricks and heaps of stones, while thick timbers barricaded one of the streets.

At this very moment also eight Tlaxcalans, who had had orders not to enter Cholula, arrived from their quarters outside the city and said, "Beware of the treachery that is going on in this town, Malinche. Last night the Cholulans sacrificed to their god of war seven persons, among them five children, so that the god may grant them victory over you. They are moving their wives and children out of town and all their belongings."

When Cortes heard this he sent the Tlaxcalans back to their caciques with orders to be ready if we should summon them, and turning to the caciques and papas told them to have no fear and to remain true to the obedience they had pledged him, otherwise he should feel obliged to punish them; and now, as he had already said, he purposed to take his departure to-morrow for Mexico, and he should require warriors and porters of theirs to join his army. The caciques answered that their men would be ready, and they took their leave to make the necessary preparations, very well contented in mind, for there seemed to them no doubt of the success of their plans. They had made sacrifices to their god of war and he had promised them victory.

Cortes now made every effort to find what their plans were, and commissioned Donna Marina to present still other chalchihuite stones to the two papas. She accordingly went and spoke to the priests and, adding also the presents, led them to our quarters, where Cortes asked them to tell the truth, which as papas and caciques they were twice bound to do. They then averred that the truth was their sovereign, Montezuma, could not make up his mind whether he should permit us to march to his city or not, and he changed his mind several times a day — at one time ordering them to pay us the greatest reverence and guide us to Mexico, at another time sending word that his gods, Tezcatlipoca and Huitzilopochtli, in whose advice he confided, counselled him to imprison or kill us in Cholula. To this end he had the very day before sent twenty thousand men, one half of whom were now secreted in the town and the other half lying in ambush in mountain ravines. Between these troops and the two thousand warriors of Cholula who were to accompany us and act in concert with the Mexicans, we should not be able to escape death, or at least capture and transport to Mexico — all save twenty, who were to be sacrificed before the idols of Cholula. After Cortes had gained this information he presented both papas with finely embroidered cloth, and told them not to tell what had passed between him and them; if they did, they should on our return from Mexico certainly die.

That night Cortes called a council of war. Opinions, as happens on such occasions, were various. Some thought we should change our course; others that we should go back to Tlaxcala; others that if we let such treachery go unpunished we should meet worse, and it would be better to make an attack right there in the town, where we could find ample supplies and do more effective work than in the open field. To this last opinion all at length agreed, and as Cortes had given out that we were to start the following morning, we should therefore make as if we were tying up our knapsacks, and attack the Indian warriors in the ample square where we lodged, and within its high walls pay them their dues. To the ambassadors of Montezuma we should say some villains of Cholula had formed a conspiracy and attempted to lay it at the door of their monarch, but we could not for a moment believe Montezuma had given such orders; however, we must beg them to stay in our quarters and have no converse with the Cholulans.

That we were to be attacked we also gained further certainty through an elderly Indian woman, wife of a cacique. The beldame had seen and admired the youth and good looks and rich trinkets of Donna Marina, and had gone so far as to tell her, if she wanted to save her life she should come to her house, for we were all to be killed that night or the very next day; that the great Montezuma had sent an army of Mexicans to join the Cholulans and had ordered them to leave no one of us alive; and because she felt a sort of compassion for Donna Marina she advised her to pack her things in all haste and come to her house. There she would marry her to her second son.

Now Donna Marina had a good deal of native mother-wit and shrewdness, and she said to the dame, "How thankful I am to you, good mother! I would go with you this minute, but I have a lot of mantles and jewels and no one here to carry them. May I beg you, good mother, to wait a little, you and your son? — and sometime to-night we will leave. You see these teules have eyes and ears everywhere."

The beldame stayed on, chatting, and Donna Marina questioned her as to the manner in which they planned to kill us. The woman's answers agreed perfectly with the account the two papas had given. " I know all this from my husband," she continued, " for he is chief of one of the divisions of this city and has already joined the men under his command. I have known it three days, for my husband had a gilded drum sent him from Mexico, and three officers had rich cloaks and jewels of gold with orders to take all the teules prisoners and send them to the great city."

" How delighted I am! " returned Donna Marina, " that your son, to whom you intend to marry me, is a man of such rank! Good mother, wait here while I go and pack my things, for I can not carry all alone. You must help me." Then Donna Marina went swiftly to our captain and told him all the Indian woman had said, and he ordered the woman brought to him and he questioned her, finally placing her under guard so that she would not disclose anything to the Cholulans.

When dawn came it was astonishing to see the air of contempt and confidence with which the caciques and papas brought more warriors than we had asked, so many, in fact, that the courtyards could not hold them. But early as it was, they found us quite ready for our day's work. Our captain mounted his horse, and surrounded by several of us as a guard to his person, with Donna Marina also near to interpret, he severely upbraided the assembled caciques and papas, asking them why it was, when we had done them no harm, that they wished to kill us; that he had merely exhorted the tribes we had met to live cleaner lives, to do away with human sacrifice, to cease eating human flesh. Why had they dug holes in their streets, built barricades, sent away their families and property? Why had they refused us food? He knew perfectly well that many warriors lay secreted in the town and others waited to attack us on our way to Mexico. If they wanted to kill us, why did they not meet us in open field as their neighbors, the Tlaxcalans, had done? He knew they had sacrificed seven Indians to their god of war that they might gain the victory. But their god's promises were lies and deceits and their treachery would strike back on them.

The caciques and papas, when they heard all this, confessed that it was true, but added that they were not the guilty ones, for the ambassadors of Montezuma had ordered it in the name of their lord. Cortes answered that Spanish law did not permit such treason to go unpunished, and, so speaking, he ordered the firing of a cannon. This was the agreed signal for us to fall upon them. We gave them a blow which they will forever remember. After a couple of hours our friends of Tlaxcala came storming into the town and taking the Cholulans prisoners, so deeply rooted was their hatred.

At last the Cholulans begged us to pardon them, saying we had punished the real traitors. Upon this Cortes desired them all to come back to their homes, and he promised no harm should befall them. The long feud between Tlaxcalans and Cholulans Cortes also at this time healed, and a good understanding grew between them that has never since been disturbed.

As soon as the town was again filled with its people and the markets open as usual, Cortes called together all the papas, caciques and other leaders of the city, and set clearly before them matters of our holy religion, telling them they must cease worshiping idols and committing other offences; that they now saw how their gods had lied only five days before when they promised them victory. They must pull down their idols, he told them, and clean and whitewash their temples that we might fit up a chapel and set a cross there. Through several days they kept delaying, though many times Cortes ordered them to do this. Finally Padre de Olmedo eased the mind of our captain by assuring him that it was too much to take away their idols before they had some understanding of our faith, that time would give us experience in the way to guide them, and we ought first to see how our expedition to Mexico turned out. For the present, he said, we had given pious counsel.*

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* With this opinion of Olmedo stood also Las Casas, famed as "the apostle of the Indies" and "protector of the Indians," who testified, "Before the idols can be taken from their hearts we must know the estimation the idolaters have formed of their gods. Then we must paint on their hearts the conception of the true God. Afterwards, shocked at their error, they themselves will throw down and destroy willingly and with their own hands the idols they venerated. . . . This was not the last of the blunders made with these Indians in this matter of religion; they have made them erect crosses, inducing the Indians to reverence them. . . . The most certain and convenient rule and doctrine Christians ought to give and hold when they go for a short time into a place, as these went, and also when they go to live among the people, is to give them examples of virtuous and Christian works, in order that, seeing their deeds, the natives praise and give glory to the God and Father of the Christians, judging that he who has such worshipers cannot but be the good and true God."

CHAPTER X

What happened to us as we neared the great and splendid City of Mexico; and how we made our bold and daring entrance, and Montezuma met us in solemn state and visited with Cortes.

We had now lain a fortnight at Cholula and had seen the town repeopled, the markets again filled with goods, peace concluded and a cross erected. The troops sent to lie in ambush and attack us had gone back to Mexico, and again Montezuma sent spies to find what our plans were and if we purposed going to his city. Again, therefore, our captain called a council of those officers and soldiers in whose loyalty and judgment he had confidence, and it was agreed that we should send a friendly message to Montezuma. "We had now carried out the command of our king," the message went, "journeying over many seas and through far distant lands solely to see him and tell him what it would be greatest advantage for him to know. We had taken the road to Cholula because his ambassadors had guided us, and there we had been forced to punish some of the people who had treacherously plotted to kill us. Convinced of his friendship, we were setting out at once for his great city."

When Montezuma heard this message of ours, and learned that we did not lay blame for the Cholulan disaster at his door, he again began to fast with his papas, and also to make sacrifices to his gods in order to learn if they would permit him to allow us to enter the city. The answer they gave was like their first — that he should allow us to enter the metropolis and then slay us at his pleasure. So it came about that Montezuma despatched six chiefs bearing gold and jewels, valued at about two thousand dollars, and several loads of richly embroidered stuffs. Introduced to the presence of Cortes, these caciques in reverence touched the ground with their hands and standing before our captain said, " Malinche, our ruler, Montezuma, sends you this present and begs you to accept it with the same kindness he bears you and your brothers. The troubles the people of Cholula caused you weigh grievously on him. Be assured of his friendship and go to his city whenever you like. He will receive you with honors. He can not entertain you as he might wish, because he has nothing to give you to eat, owing to his city standing in the midst of a lake, but he will endeavor to do all he is able, and has ordered all towns through which you pass to supply your every need."

We set out from Cholula with our usual precautions, a few of our cavalry in advance to examine the country ahead, our active foot soldiers close behind to clear the road and help in case of an ambush. On our several days' march we passed through a number of towns and villages, from which the caciques and papas brought us food and small presents of gold and stuffs; and, moreover, quite secretly to the Mexican ambassadors, complained bitterly of Montezuma and his tax collectors, how they robbed them of all they possessed and reduced their wives and daughters, if they were handsome, to base servitude; enslaving the men also to carry timber, stones and maize by water and land, and plant the monarch's cornfield, and finally forcing them to give up their own lands to support the temples of the gods.

As we marched onward still other Mexican chiefs bearing a present of gold and cloth appeared before Cortes and addressed him as their forerunners had done. "Malinche," they said, "our lord, the great Montezuma, sends you this present and expresses his sorrow for the many hardships you have suffered in your exhausting journey to see him. He has already sent you quantities of silver and gold and chalchihuites as tribute to your sovereign, and presents to you and the teules with you. But now he begs you not to advance further, but to return whence you have come. Gold, silver and rich stones he promises to send you to your port on the coast, but he altogether forbids you to enter Mexico. You can get in only by a narrow causeway; there is no food for you to eat, and all his troops are under arms to oppose you."

However unpleasant this message might have been to Cortes, he received the ambassadors with kindness and accepted their presents. He marvelled, he went on to tell them, how their lord, Montezuma, who was so great a prince and had named himself our friend, could so often change his mind, one day saying one thing, the next countermanding it. Would it be right for us, after we, in carrying out the commands of our king, had come so near the city to turn back? We had no choice left. In one way or another we must enter. From now on Montezuma must send no more such messages as this, for Cortes was bound to see him and to set forth the whole purpose for which he had come. Then, after we had told our errand, if our stay in the city annoyed him, we would return. As to what they said about there being little food in Mexico, we were used to scant diet.

With this answer Cortes sent the ambassadors back. But we, for our part, became more thoughtful. We were mortals and feared death, and the cages in which they fattened victims, and their threats that they would seize and sacrifice us before their idols. Now, doubly on guard in the thickly populated country, we made short days' marches, arranged the manner we should enter the great city, and commended ourselves to God with faith that the power that had vouchsafed us protection in the past would guard us against the evils of Mexico.

To a town in which we rested Montezuma now despatched his nephew, Cacamatzin, lord of Texcoco, to bid us welcome. The young man came toward us in great pomp, seated in a litter richly wrought with silver, and green feathers, and many precious stones set in finest gold, and borne by eight caciques upon their shoulders. They came to the front of Cortes' quarters and then they aided Cacamatzin out of the litter and swept clean the ground before him. In all his splendor standing before Cortes, the cacique said, " Malinche, I and these chiefs have come to wait upon and provide you and your comrades all that you may need, and to conduct you to quarters we have prepared for you in our city. The powerful Montezuma commands this."

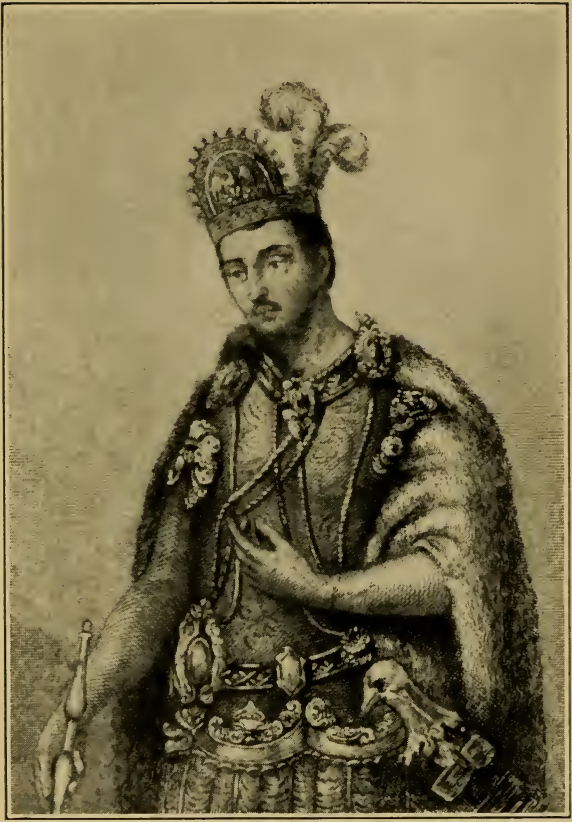
In the way he knew so well Cortes answered with many fine things, and we then continued our march. Vast crowds, both followers of the caciques and curious country folks, so surrounded us that we could scarcely move along. Next morning we arrived at a broad causeway, when we saw many towns and villages built in the lake, and other large towns on the land, with the level causeway running in a straight line to Mexico. We were astounded and told one another that the majestic towers and houses, all of massive stone and rising out of the waters, were like enchanted castles we had read of in books. Indeed, some of our men even asked if what we saw was not a dream.

And when we entered the city of Iztapalapa, our quarters in palaces! — their spacious courts, their hewn stone and cedar and other sweet-scented wood! their great rooms canopied with cotton cloth! After we had taken a good look at this we went to the gardens, where I could not gratify myself too much with the trees which spread delightful scents, the rose bushes, the flower beds and fruit trees, the fresh-water pond, and openings built of many-colored stones so that large canoes could pass to the garden from the lake. Water-loving birds of many kinds were swimming up and down the pond, and everything was charming. We could not find words to express our astonishment.

Escorted by all the great caciques who had thronged to us the past few days, we left Iztapalapa early next morning, and marched along the causeway, there about eight paces in width. Broad as it was, it was much too narrow to hold the crowds who kept coming to gaze at us. We could scarcely move along. The tops of the temples and towers were crowded also, while the lake beneath was alive with canoes bearing people eager to catch a glimpse of us. And who can wonder! — for never had they seen horses, nor men such as we!

As for ourselves, we did not know what to think, or whether what we beheld was real. On one side of us large towns, in the lake many more, the canoe-covered lake itself, and before us the splendor of the great city of Mexico! Innumerable crowds! — and we — not even four hundred men! — and all remembering the warnings given by friendly tribes not to trust our lives to the treachery of a people who would kill us as soon as they had us in their town. In all the world what men have ever ventured so bold a deed as this!

When we had come to where another small causeway branched off other caciques, all clad in splendid mantles, met us and, touching the ground with their hands in token of peace, bade us welcome in the name of Montezuma. We halted a good while at this fork, for Cacamatzin and other chiefs with us went forward to meet the ruler, now slowly approaching, seated in a litter surrounded by caciques. When we had again advanced to a place where several small towers rose together, the monarch got down from his litter, the chief caciques supporting him under the arms and holding over his head a canopy wrought with green feathers, gold and silver embroidery, pearls and chalchihuite stones — all very wonderful.



The great Montezuma

Montezuma himself was sumptuously dressed, as was always his habit, and he had on sandals richly set with precious stones and soled with solid gold. The four chiefs who supported him had somewhere on the road also put on richer garments than those in which they had met us. Other chiefs besides these distinguished caciques were about the monarch, sweeping the ground where he would tread and spreading cloths that he might not step on the bare earth. No one of these caciques dared to look the monarch full in the face, but every one kept his eyes lowered in reverence, except the four cousins and nephews who supported him.

When Cortes learned that Montezuma was coming near, he dismounted from his horse and advanced to meet him. Many compliments passed between the two, Montezuma bidding Cortes welcome, and our captain, through Donna Marina, hoping his majesty was in good health. If I remember aright, Cortes offered Montezuma the place of honor on the right, but he gave his hand to Cortes, who now brought out a necklace of glass stones, of the most beautiful shapes and colors, strung on gold wire and perfumed with musk. This he hung round the neck of Montezuma, and when he had placed it he was going to embrace the monarch, but the caciques held him back that he should not do their ruler so great an indignity. Through the words of Donna Marina Cortes then told how glad his heart was at meeting Montezuma face to face, and of the honor he had done us in coming himself to meet us. Montezuma, also, for his part spoke words of politeness, and then ordered the two caciques who were his nephews to conduct us to our quarters, he himself returning to the city with his numerous suite. As they passed us we stood watching how all paid him formal veneration and marched with head bent forward and eyes fixed on the ground. The road before us was now less crowded, and yet who could count the vast number of men, women and children gathered merely to look upon us!

Our quarters were in a building where there was room enough for all of us, apartments which had been occupied in his lifetime by the father of Montezuma. They chose it for our dwelling because it was near by temples with idols, and since they termed us teules and thought us such, that we might dwell as equals by their gods. The chambers were very spacious, and those set apart for our captain were canopied with cloth. Every one of us had his own bed of matting, and no better bed is given, how great soever the chief. Notwithstanding the large size of the building every place was swept clean, coated with fresh plaster and garlanded.

When we came to the great court-yard of the palace Montezuma, himself, was waiting and he took

Cortes by the hand and led him to the richly decorated apartment where he was to lodge. And he hung about the neck of our captain a rich necklace, most curiously wrought of golden crabs, astonishing the caciques of his suite by the honor he bestowed until he took leave, saying, " Malinche, you and your brothers must now do as if you were at home, and rest after your wearisome journey." He then returned to his own palace close by, while we divided our lodgings by companies, placed our cannon in advantageous position and so studied our orders that we could be ready at a moment's notice. We then sat down to a plentiful dinner which they spread before us. Thus was our memorable and daring entrance into the great city of Mexico on the 8th day of November, in the year of our Lord, 1519.

After Montezuma had dined and had learned that we, likewise, had eaten, he came with the pomp of a company of kinsmen to pay us a visit. Cortes, hearing of his approach, went to the middle of the hall to receive him, where Montezuma took our captain by the hand and seated him next himself on gold-wrought seats his followers had brought. The monarch then began to speak in most excellent fashion, saying first of all that he was delighted to entertain gentlemen so valiant as Cortes and all of us. A couple of years before he had had news of one captain who came to Chanpoton, and last year they had brought account of another with four ships. Each time he had wished to see them, and now that his wishes were fulfilled he was ready to render us service and provide for us with whatever he had; for assuredly we were those of whom his forefathers had spoken — a folk who should come from where the sun rose and rule these lands. He no longer doubted since we had fought the battles, which he had seen in pictures true to life, against the Tabascans and Tlaxcalans.

In his turn Cortes said we should never be able to repay him the courtesies he had shown us, and it was indeed true that we came from where the sun rose and were subjects of a ruler who held many and great princes in his sway,— a king who, having heard of Montezuma and his power, had sent us to see him and beg him and his people to become Christians and adore one true God for their souls' salvation.

After this conference Montezuma presented our captain with some very rich gold baubles and three loads of cotton stuffs splendidly worked with feathers, and to every soldier two loads of mantles — all he gave seemingly with pleasure, and in all he did he showed good breeding. He further asked if we were all brothers and all subjects of our great king, and Cortes answered yes, brothers in affection and friendship. He ordered his stewards to give us fowls and fruits with maize and milling stones, and to furnish women to grind our corn and make our bread. He ordered fodder, also, for our horses, after which he took leave with great courtesy. Nevertheless, our captain issued strict orders that no one should stir from our quarters until we knew better just how affairs stood.

Next day Cortes determined to visit the monarch in his own palace, after sending to ask if with what he planned to do a visit from him would be agreeable. On our arrival Montezuma advanced to the middle of the hall to meet us. Only his nephews were with him, for none but kinsmen entered his rooms. After their first reverential greetings were over, he and our captain took each other by the hand and Montezuma seated Cortes at his right hand, and bade all of us take seats which he had ordered brought in. Then through his interpreters Cortes spoke at considerable length, telling Montezuma how, in coming to talk with so great a ruler, we fulfilled the commands of our king and our own wishes; that he had now come to disclose the commands of the true God, who created heaven, earth, the sea and every living thing, without whose holy will nothing existed, and he begged the attention of Montezuma to these words of his that we are all brothers, and that such a brother as our great king grieved to think so many human souls should be led to hell by these idols; for this reason he had sent us to put an end to such misery and to exhort the people no longer to adore such gods, nor to sacrifice human brothers to them, nor to kidnap and commit other offences; and shortly our king would send men of holy lives who would explain more fully; of these we were merely first messengers, and begged them to do what we asked.

In turn Montezuma answered, "Malinche, what you have just been telling of your God I have understood before now, from what you said to my ambassadors on the sand dunes, and from what you have stated about the cross in the towns through which you have come. We have not made any answer because here from long ages we have worshipped our own gods and believed them good gods, just as you have worshipped yours; therefore let us talk more on the subject. As to the creation of the world, we, too, believe it was created ages ago, and for this reason we think you are those people whom our ancestors foretold should come from the region of the sunrise. I feel myself indebted to your great king and I will give him of whatever I possess." He also continued, saying that now the gods had fulfilled his wish of seeing the strange men coming to his coast, and we were in his dwelling, we should deem it our home and rest from our exhaustion, for we should want nothing. Sometimes, it is true, he had sent us word that we should not enter his city, but not of his own will, his subjects had forced him, for they feared us and said we shot out lightning and fire, and killed many Indians with our horses and were unruly teules — these and other childish tales. But now he had seen us, and he knew we were of flesh and bone, and of sound understanding and enduring courage, and he thought more highly of us than he had before and was ready to share all he had with us.

Cortes and all of us answered that we thanked him for this evidence of his very friendly feeling, whereupon Montezuma said, laughing, for he was always of a bright, merry manner, " I know very well, Malinche, what those close allies of yours, the Tlaxcalans, have told you about me, how I am a sort of god or teul and my houses are filled with gold, silver and precious stones. Reasonable men such as you of course put no faith in their talk and took it for nonsense, but now, Malinche, you see for yourself that my body is of flesh and bone like yours. I am, to be sure, a powerful monarch, and have inherited treasures from my forefathers, but the rest they told is nonsense. You must think of that as I think of your lightning and flames scattered in all directions."

Cortes laughingly answered, " We knew from of old that enemies neither speak well of each other, nor tell the truth; and we well knew that in this quarter of the world there was not another so illustrious monarch, and not without reason had he been praised to our king."

While this conversation went on Montezuma had secretly sent one of his nephews with orders to his stewards to bring certain pieces of gold and ten loads of cotton, which he now divided between Cortes and the four officers present; and to each of us five soldiers present he gave two chains of gold for the neck and two loads of cotton cloth. Everything he gave was with the best of will, and with an air of dignity befitting a great monarch.

It was now past noon and Cortes began to fear that our longer stay might prove tedious, so rising from his seat he said, "Montezuma, in your kindness you have the habit of every day heaping favor on favor. But it is now your dinner hour." The monarch in turn thanked us for coming to visit him, and taking our leave with many courtesies we returned to our lodgings.

CHAPTER XI

How the great Montezuma looked, how he dined, his arsenals, his craftsmen and craftswomen, his gardens, aviary, beasts of prey; how we viewed the great market place and what else we saw when we ascended the chief temple.

THE mighty Montezuma may have been at this time about forty years of age. He was tall and had a slender body of beautiful proportion, and a complexion not very brown but approaching the Indians' in color. He did not wear his hair long, but only so as to cover his ears, and his beard was scanty. His face was rather long, but cheerful, and he had fine eyes which reflected his moods of tenderness and gravity. He was particularly neat in his person and bathed every afternoon. The clothes that he had on one day he did not put on again till after four days.

In halls entering his apartments he had always a guard of over two hundred men, with whom, however, he held no conversation, except to give or receive some intelligence. Whenever they went to speak to him they had first to take off their rich cloaks and put on others of little value, though these must be neat and clean; and they entered his presence barefoot and eyes cast down. During three prostrations they were obliged to make before they came up to him they must say in their speech, "Lord, my Lord, my great Lord," and make their report with eyes still cast down and in fewest possible words. Withdrawing from his presence, their formalities required that they should not turn their backs but keep their faces towards the monarch and eyes still on the ground and back out of the room.

For his dining his cooks prepared over thirty different dishes, placing small earthern brasiers underneath each that the food should not get cold. Not often, but sometimes, Montezuma went out with the officers of his household and chose of what his dinner should be; but this was mere pastime. I heard it said that the flesh of young boys, as a very dainty morsel, was sometimes set before him. If there were any truth in this we could not find, on account of the variety every day cooked, such as fowls, turkeys, pheasants, partridges, quail, wild and tame geese, venison, musk boar, pigeons, hares and rabbits, and many other sorts of birds and beasts, which it would not be an easy task to name. But this I do know, that after Cortes reproached him with the sacrifices of human beings and the eating of their flesh, he ordered that no such dishes should again be brought to his table. Every kind of fruit which the land produced was served, and from time to time they brought him cacao frothed in cups of pure gold.

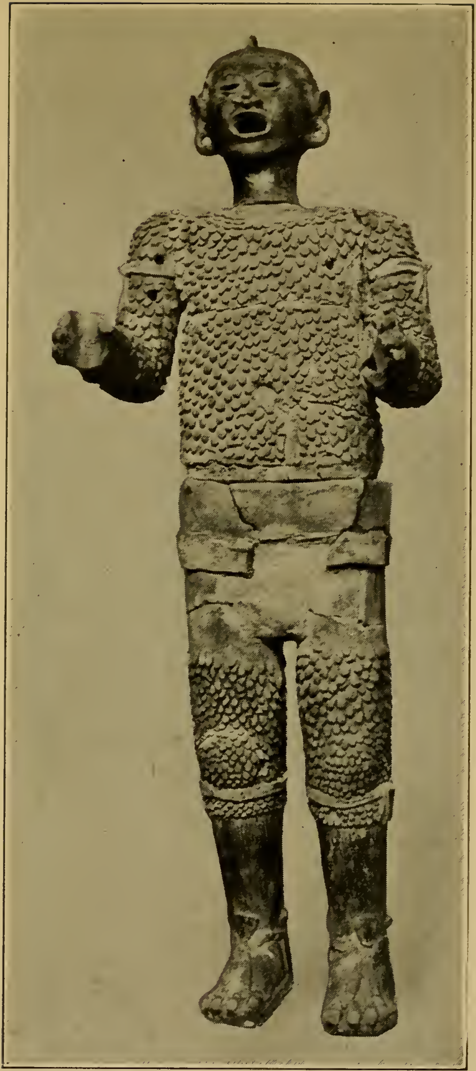
The monarch was served at dinner after this manner:—The chair on which he sat was rather low, but beautifully carved and cushioned. The table, also low, was covered with a white cloth and napkin. Four very neat and beautiful women first brought water in a sort of pitcher for his hands, and then they held basins below to catch the water and presented him towels to dry his hands. Two other women brought maize bread — served as was all his food on red or black Cholulan earthenware — and as soon as he began to eat they placed before him a gold-painted screen so that no one might watch him eating. Four elderly caciques, however, came in, and with these Montezuma conversed from time to time. Sometimes he would favor them by giving them a plate of what tasted best to him, but they ate standing with veneration and not looking at his face. These grey-haired elders, we learned, were his nearest of kin and counsellors and chief justices. While the monarch was at table the men on guard in the halls never spoke aloud nor made any kind of noise.

Sometimes during his dining he would have in deformed persons very small of stature, who jested and went through antics for his amusement; and at other times buffoons to enliven him with their witty sayings; and then again dancers and singers, for

Montezuma was fond of song and entertainment, and he would order broken food and pitchers of cacao distributed to these performers. When he had done dining the four women cleared the cloths and brought him water to wash his hands; and then they laid on the table three gilded tubes holding liquid amber mixed with certain herbs the Indians call tobacco. After one of the tubes was lighted the monarch inhaled a very little of the smoke, and fell asleep.

Montezuma had numerous stewards, treasurers and cooks — indeed there is so much to tell that I know not where to begin. The limitless supply of provisions, the excellent order maintained, the expenses of the table of the guards and of the women who baked and made thousands of cups of frothy cacao — all kept us wondering. At that time a great cacique had the accounting of the whole of Montezuma's revenue in large books of paper. Such account-books filled a large house.

Two other houses were arsenals filled with arms of every sort, many adorned with gold and precious stones. With all the different sized shields, broadswords set with flint knives, lances with a fathom of blade fitted with knives, bows and arrows, slings with stones rounded by hand, large shields so ingeniously made that they could be rolled up out of the way when the warriors were not fighting — with



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This terra cotta figure of a warrior, found in a cave in the Valley of Mexico, makes clearer their quilted cotton armor — its jacket tied in the back, its loin cloth, its leggings and sandals. The ears are pierced for ornaments and the ring on the top of the head was perhaps for a head-dress of feathers.

all these we saw there great quantities of armor of quilted cotton, wrought with different-colored feathers, and also feathered helmets of wood and bone. Workmen were always busy adding to this store.

Skilled workmen Montezuma likewise employed in every craft that the Mexicans knew — in the cutting and polishing of precious stones, in working and smelting of gold and silver in which they astonish even the great goldsmiths of Spain.* Masters in painting and feather-work and sculpture also wrought for him, and there are still in Mexico artists so skilful that had they lived in the days of the ancient Greek Apelles, or of Michael Angelo of our own time, their work would be in their company. The women are especially skilful in weaving fabrics of the finest threads and wonderfully interweaving feathers. In the house of Montezuma, daughters of caciques made the most beautiful stuffs, and others who lived in other houses in retirement, like nuns, also did weaving especially of feathers. Houses for such nuns stood near a great temple of Huitzilopochtli, god of war, and also elsewhere in devotion to certain goddesses, and in them dwelt Indian girls until they married.†

* Here in Mexico, as at times elsewhere in human history, real barbarism was mitigated and made appealing by most marvellous perfection in details of industrial art.

† Very charmingly expressed advices of a Mexican mother to

Montezuma had also plantations of medicinal and useful herbs, gardens for the culture of flowers and trees, where countless birds sang and nested among the branches, and ponds and baths of fresh water where the water came in at one end and flowed out at the other. All the ponds and tanks were substantially walled with masonry, well cemented, as was also the theatre where his singers, dancers and clowns performed.

her daughter still live in writings of the old missionary, Sahagun. The following extracts are from Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico":—"This I tell you that you may know that I and your father are sources of your being; it is we who now instruct you. See that you receive our words and treasure them in your breast. Take care that your garments are such as are decent and proper; and observe that you do not adorn yourself with much finery, since this is a mark of vanity and folly. Let your clothes be becoming and neat that you may appear neither fantastic nor mean.

"When you speak do not hurry your words from uneasiness, but speak deliberately and calmly. Do not raise your voice very high, nor speak very low, but in a moderate tone. Neither mince when you speak, nor when you salute, nor speak through your nose; but let your words be proper, of a good sound and your voice gentle.

"In walking, my daughter, see that you behave becomingly, neither going with haste nor too slowly, and when you are in the street do not carry your head much inclined or your body bent; nor as little go with your head very much raised, since it is mark of ill-breeding. Walk through the streets quietly and with propriety. Another thing that you must attend to, my daughter, is, that, when you are in the street, you do not go looking hither and thither, nor turning your head to look at this and that. Look upon those you meet with serene countenance, and give no one occasion of being offended with you. See, my daughter, that you give yourself no concern about the words you may hear, in going

Then the monarch had an aviary. It is indeed difficult for me to restrain myself from telling too minutely of this. For there was in it, in the full splendor of plumage, every species of bird from the royal eagle to tiny birds of many colors,— even to the birds from whose green plumage they make their beautiful green feather work. All these birds had houses, and men and women keepers fed them proper food, cleaned their nests and set them for breeding. In the courtyard stood a large tank of fresh water,

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through the street, nor pay any regard to them, let those who come and go say what they will. Take care that you neither answer nor speak, but act as if you neither heard nor understood. See, likewise, my daughter, that you never paint your face, nor stain it, nor your lips, with colors in order to appear well. Paints and colorings are things which bad women use — the immodest, who have lost shame and even sense, who are like fools and drunkards.

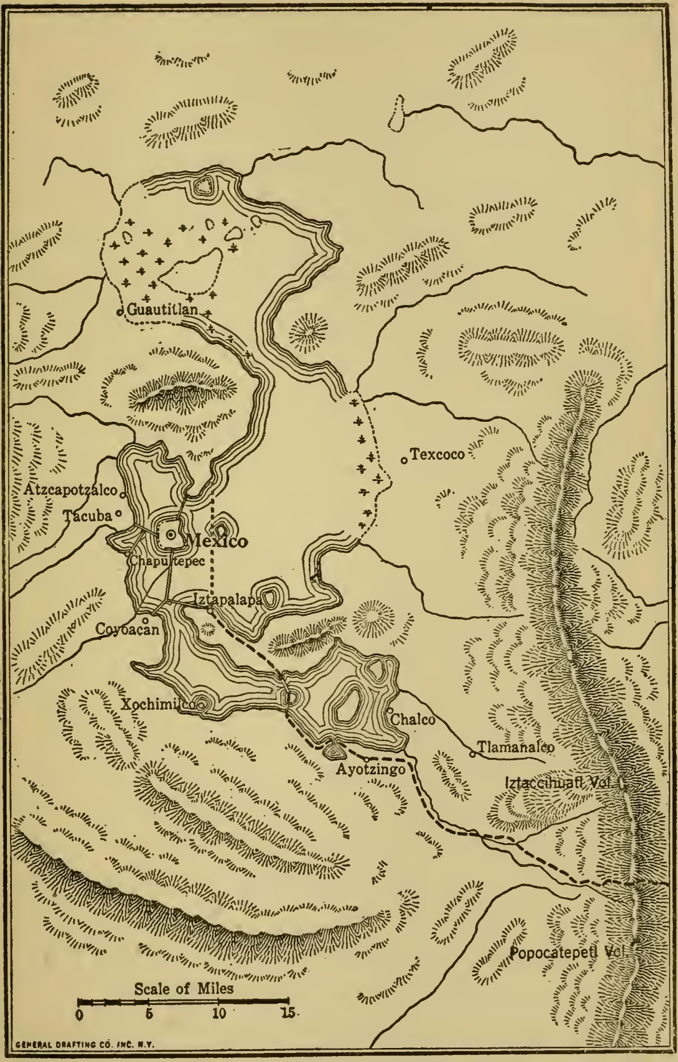
"Adorn yourself, wash yourself, and cleanse your clothes; but do this with moderation. My daughter, this is the course for you to take, since in this manner the ancestors from whom you sprang brought us up. Those noble and venerable dames, your grandmothers, told us not so many things as I have told you. My tenderly loved daughter, my little dove, keep this illustration in your heart.

"When it shall please God that you receive a husband, be free from arrogance, see that you do not neglect him or allow your heart to be in opposition to him. Beware that in no time nor place you commit treason against him. Remember that though no man sees you, nor your husband ever knows, God, who is in every place, sees you, and will be angry with you and will permit you to have neither contentment nor tranquillity. My dear daughter, whom I love, see that you live in the world in peace and contentment all the days you shall live. May God prosper you, my first-born, and may you come to God who is in every place."

and in it were those water fowls of stilt legs and plumage of red called flamingos.

In another great house they kept terrible idols, and with them beasts of prey, such as tigers, lions, jackals, foxes, and other flesh-eating animals. They fed them on deer, turkeys, dogs and such like, and I have heard it said, also, the bodies of Indians sacrificed they gave to these fierce beasts in their abominable dens — in which also were vipers and other poisonous snakes, among them one which carries at the end of the tail a kind of rattle. When all the lions and tigers roared together, and jackals and foxes howled and the serpents hissed, it was horrible to hear and you could not think otherwise than that you were in hell.

We had been four days in the city of Mexico, and neither our captain nor any of us had left our quarters except to visit the gardens and buildings near by. Cortes now said to us that we should see the great plaza, and the chief temple of the god of war, and he sent Donna Marina and Aguilar to ask permission. When the monarch knew our wishes he said we were welcome to go; still, since he was apprehensive that we might do some dishonor to his gods, he would himself go with us and bring a company of caciques. He came, and in a rich litter, but when he was half way between his palace and the temple, he left the litter, for he deemed it lack of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Texcoco
Atzcapotzalco
Tacuba
Mexico
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Chalco
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With the City of Mexico as a centre, many cities and villages grouped round the lake. A few are here named.

respect to approach his idols otherwise than on foot. As he walked he leaned on the arms of some of his caciques, and others went before him holding high two staves, like sceptres, which signified that the monarch was approaching. He ascended the steps of the temple in company with many papas, and on reaching the top began to burn incense and perform other ceremonies to Huitzilopochtli.

We for our part entered the temple yards and found them paved with white flagstones, and where stones were wanting, with cement, all kept so very clean one could not find the smallest particle of dust or straw anywhere, and enclosed by a double wall of stone. Before we had mounted a single one of the one hundred and fourteen steps of the temple, Montezuma sent down six priests and two chiefs to help our captain up. They were going to take him by the arms, just as they helped Montezuma. Cortes, however, would not permit them to aid him.

When we reached the summit we saw a platform set about with large stones, on which they put those doomed for sacrifice, and near by was an image shaped like a dragon, and other abominable figures, and a quantity of fresh blood. Montezuma himself accompanied by two papas came out of a chapel in which his cursed idols were standing and received us with courtesy. " Ascending this great temple of ours, Malinche, must have fatigued you," he said;

on which Cortes assured him that nothing ever tired him and his companions. The monarch then took him by the hand and told him to look down on his great city, and all the other cities standing in the water and the many other towns on land round the lake. Indeed the accursed temple stood so high that we could see the great causeway leading to the city, and the aqueduct which provides the whole town with sweet water from Chapultepec. We could see also the bridges of the three causeways, and canoes speeding in the lake, coming with supplies of food and going with bales of merchandise. And in all the towns temples rose gleaming white, like towers and castles in our Spanish towns, and made a picture wonderful to see.

We looked down also on the great market place, and the crowds of people in it, so many buying and selling that the hum of their voices could be heard miles away. Some of our old soldiers who had been in Constantinople, and Rome, and many parts of the world, said they never had seen a market place so large, so crowded and so well arranged. Every kind of merchandise had its separate spot for sale — gold and silver wares, cotton and hennequen cloths, twisted thread, tanned and untanned skins of tigers, lions, red deer, wild cats and other beasts of prey, beans, sage, cacao and other vegetables, fowls, rabbits, deer, dogs, and other meats, fruit of all kinds, cooked foods, honey and honey and nut pastes, every sort of earthern ware, and copper, brass and tin, furniture such as tables, benches, cradles — but why do I waste words when I can not note down the details of this great market! Before turning from these sights Cortes said to Fray Bartolome de Olmedo, "We should, perhaps, take this opportunity to ask permission to build our church here"; to which the padre answered that it would be excellent, if Montezuma would grant it, but it seemed to him overhasty to make the proposition now when probably the monarch would be little disposed to it. Cortes then asked the favor of seeing the idols and teules. After Montezuma had spoken to his chief priests, we entered a small tower in which there were two altars with richly wrought carvings. On each altar stood a figure, gigantic, very fat, and that on the right represented their god of war, Huitzilopochtli.* This idol had a very broad face with terrible eyes, and was covered with precious stones, gold and pearls. Great snakes, likewise made of gold and precious stones, girdled the body of the monster, which in one hand held a bow, in the other a bunch of arrows. A small figure standing by its side they said was his page, at any rate it held the idol's short lance and shield decorated with gold and jewels. Round the neck of Huitzilopochtli were figures of human faces made of gold, and hearts of silver set with many precious blue stones. In front of the image stood several incense pans in which the hearts of three Indians, who had that day been sacrificed, were burning with copal as a burnt-offering. The walls of the chapel and the whole floor were so encrusted with human blood that they were black, and the stench of the place was unendurable.

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* See note on foregoing page 28.

On the left hand stood another figure of the same size as that of Huitzilopochtli. Its face was very like that of a bear, and its shining eyes were made of the looking glass of their country. This idol, like the other, for they say they are brothers, was plastered with precious stones. It was Tezcatlipoca, god of hell, and in charge of the souls of the Mexicans. His body was encircled by little devils with snakes' tails. The walls and floor round this idol, too, were saturated with blood so that the place smelled as vilely as a slaughter house in Spain. Five human hearts were that day's sacrifice to him.

At the very top of this temple rose another chapel, the woodwork richly carved, and in it was another image, half man and half lizard, covered with precious stones, and half of the body spread with a mantle. They said the half-covered body held seeds of every plant of the earth, for this image represented the god of seed time and harvest. I have forgotten its name but not that here, also, everything was covered with blood and the stench so offensive that we could hardly wait till we could get out. In this chapel was an enormous drum, which made a dismal noise when they beat it, like a drum of hell so to speak, and its head of the skins of snakes resounded so it could be heard as many as eight miles. In this place, also, were trumpets, slaughter knives and burnt hearts of Indians offered to the god — and everything clotted with blood. We hastened away from the horrors.

Our captain now said to Montezuma, " I can not imagine how such a wise man and powerful monarch as you should not have discovered that these idols of yours are evil spirits. That it may be proved to you, and that your papas may see it clearly, permit me to set a cross here at the top of this temple, and in the place where Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca stand give me space to put up an image of Our Lady. Then you will see by the fear that will seize these idols that they have been deceiving you."

Montezuma had already seen an image of Our Lady, yet he was greatly irritated, and answered, " Malinche, if I had supposed that you would say such evil things, I certainly should not have shown you my gods. We think them good gods. They give us health, rains, good weather and good harvests, and victory when we ask them for it. Most earnestly I beg you to say no more to insult them."

When Cortes heard this protest, and saw the excitement of the monarch and the two papas who stood by, he said in cheerful wise to Montezuma, " It is time for us to go." Montezuma answered that he would not keep us longer, but he himself must stay and atone to his gods by prayer and sacrifice for his sin in permitting us to ascend the great temple and affront them. " In that case," returned Cortes, " I ask your pardon." Upon that we descended.

A little apart from the chief temple was another small tower, also an idol house. Rather I should term it a temple of hell, for at one of its doors was a terrible demon mouth fitted with great fangs. Near it also stood figures of devils and serpents, and an altar encrusted with blood and black with smoke. Further within were dishes and other basins in which the priests cooked the flesh of the unfortunates whom they sacrificed — the flesh they themselves ate. Near the altar were knives and wooden blocks such as those they cut meat upon in slaughter houses, and behind that cursed house lay piles of firewood and a tank of running water. I called the place " The House of Satan."

Beyond the splendid courtyard stood another temple, stained with blood and smoke, where great Mexican caciques were buried, and another holding human skulls and bones piled in orderly fashion. Here also other idols, and other priests clad in long black robes with hoods shaped like those worn by Dominican friars. The hair of these papas was long and matted with clotted blood. At no great distance from this place of skulls stood other temples to still other gods said to be protectors of marriage. One, where abominable human sacrifices were offered, was for men, and another for women in which women made sacrifices and held festivals in endeavor to induce the gods to give them good husbands.

Cortes and the rest of us at last grew weary of seeing so many idols and the horrible utensils used about them and we returned to our lodgings accompanied by the many caciques Montezuma had sent as our escort.

CHAPTER XII

How, in setting up an altar, we found a secret treasure; and why we visited Montezuma and took him to our quarters as prisoner; how he spent his time; and how we built two sloops and sailed them on the lake; adding the story of a hawk.

Now that our captain and Fray Bartolome de Olmedo knew that Montezuma was not willing we should set a cross on the chief temple, or build a chapel there, we asked the house-stewards for masons to build us a church in our quarters. The stewards referred our request to Montezuma, who generously ordered that we be given what we wished. Our church was soon done, a cross set up, and mass said every day as long as the wine lasted. Then we went there every day and prayed in front of the altar and images, not only because we were obliged by our faith to follow this holy habit, but also that Montezuma and his caciques might notice our devotion and see us on our knees before the cross, particularly when we said the Ave Maria.

Wherever we went it was our custom carefully to examine everything. So it happened that as we were searching for a best place to set up our altar, one of our men who was a carpenter, noticed traces, all neatly plastered over, of a doorway in the wall of one of our apartments. Report that the treasure of Montezuma's father was secreted somewhere in our quarters had reached us, and our carpenter conjectured that this doorway might be the very opening to the treasury. He told two of our chief officers, relatives of mine, and these officers carried the conjecture to Cortes. The door was thereupon secretly opened, and Cortes with several officers went in. They found such vast quantities of jewels, thick and thin plates of gold, chalchihuites and other riches heaped together that they were quite speechless at the sight. News of the treasure now spread to all of our men, and very secretly we all went in to view it. I was still a young man and had never seen vast riches, but I felt sure there could not be another such mass in all the world. However, all our officers agreed that we should leave it untouched, and that the doorway should be walled up as before, and we should not speak of it lest Montezuma learn of our discovery.

All of us, officers and soldiers, were men of energy and experience, who believed that our master, Jesus Christ, aided us with his divine hand, and we now deputed four officers and twelve of our most trusted and faithful soldiers, of whom I was one, to represent to Cortes how we were cooped up in this strong city, as if in a trap or cage. We begged him to remember the causeways and bridges, how people of the towns we had passed through had cautioned us that Montezuma was acting as his god Huitzilopochtli had advised — that he allow us to enter the city and then fall on and slay us; we begged him not to trust to the kindness and good will of Montezuma, for the hearts of men, and of Indians in particular, are inconstant; all this friendship might end in a moment, at a whim of Montezuma, for he had merely to attack us with the sword, or cut off our food and water, or draw up the bridges, and we should be helpless; considering the troops of warriors Montezuma had always about him, how should we be able to defend ourselves? — since all the houses stood in the water, how could we count on the aid of our friends, the Tlaxcalans? — taking a broad view, we had no other way to safeguard our lives but to seize Montezuma, and that without further delay; all the gold he had given us, all we had seen in the secret treasury, all the food set before us could not conceal facts from us; such thoughts as these harassed us day and night and were always in our minds; and if among us there were those heedless of the trap we were in, they were senseless, their eyes dazzled by gold and incapable of seeing the death that stood before them.

When Cortes heard our plea he said, " Do not imagine, gentlemen, that I sleep in peace, or that what you state has not caused me the anxiety you express. But let us weigh well first. Are we strong enough in numbers to seize this great monarch in the midst of his guards and other warriors? By what bold deed can we so do this that he will not call on his warriors to attack us at once?"

Four of our officers said that the only way was to entice Montezuma out of his palace into our quarters, and then tell him he must remain a prisoner and if he offered any resistence or cried out, he must die. If our captain did not himself wish any hand in such a business, the officers said that they themselves would carry it out, for between the two dangers in which we stood it was better for us to take the monarch prisoner then to wait till he made war on us — for if he attacked us, what escape should we have? Moreover, some of us soldiers told Cortes that the house-steward who supplied us food had taken on haughty airs and did not supply us so well as at first. Lastly, our allies, the Tlaxcalans, had secretly said to our interpreter, Aguilar, that the Mexicans these last two days had not seemed kindly disposed toward us.

One whole hour we spent deliberating whether or not we should take Montezuma prisoner, and how the deed was to be done. At last we came to full conclusion, and Cortes gave his consent. All that following night we spent in prayer, asking the Almighty's support in our holy cause.

The next morning two Tlaxcalans secretly got into our quarters and brought from Vera Cruz a letter announcing that Juan de Escalante, whom, we said some chapters back,* we had left behind as governor of Vera Cruz, six other Spaniards, and all the Totonacs in his company had met death in a battle with Mexican warriors. So also a horse. The story went that Mexican caciques had demanded tribute; our allies, the Totonacs, had refused to pay it; Escalante had commanded the Mexicans to leave the Totonacs in peace; to which the Mexicans had sent a contemptuous answer. Engagements followed, and in our defeat our allies turned against us and refused to bring food or serve the garrison. Faith that we Spaniards were teules had vanished. Both Totonacs and Mexicans threatened our little settlement, and instead of veneration now expressed contempt.

Only God could know what sorrow this news gave us. It was the first defeat we had suffered in New Spain. Any hearty reader of this narrative sees how rapidly our fortune was changing from good to bad. We had entered this great city with a splendid and triumphant reception, we had been in possession of rich presents which Montezuma every day gave both our captain and ourselves; we had seen the treasure house filled with gold; we had known the people believed us teules who could not fail of victory in battle. Now their delusion had fled; they would look upon us as like other men, liable to defeat, and we should soon see their insolence toward us growing. Now more than ever it behooved us to get possession of Montezuma's person.

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* Pages 83 and 84.

We made final arrangements after our night of prayer that our bold attempt might redound to the glory of God. When Cortes sent to tell Montezuma that we were about to pay him a visit, the monarch more or less understood that our captain was coming because of the battle that had taken place on the coast, and he had misgivings, yet he sent word that Cortes should come and would be welcome. Our captain took with him five officers, Alvarado, Sandoval, Lugo, Leon and Avila, and also me and our interpreters, Donna Marina and Aguilar. We all went completely armed, and our whole troop stayed behind ready for march and horses saddled.

Cortes made his usual felicitations when he entered the monarch's apartments and then said through his interpreters, " I am greatly astonished that so valiant a ruler as you, who publishes himself our friend, should command your warriors near the coast to take up arms against my Spaniards, and should dare to demand from towns under the protection of my king, Indian men and women for sacrifice! Nor is this all. They have killed one of my brothers [Cortes prudently did not wish to speak of Escalante and six soldiers who died as soon as they got back to the coast encampment, for Montezuma did not then know of this] and a horse. How differently we for our part have done! As your friend I told my officers to do all they could to meet your wishes. You have ordered the very opposite. A little time ago you sent many warriors to Cholula to destroy us. From the friendship I bore you I did not then tell you I knew the fact. But now again your warriors audaciously plot to kill us. For this treachery I will not make war on you, nor destroy this city. But that we may keep peace between us, you must quietly come to our quarters and stay with us there. You shall be well served, as well as if you were in your own palace. If you now make any alarm, or cry out, these officers of mine here will kill you at once, for that purpose only I brought them with me."

At these words a sudden terror struck Montezuma and he was for a time speechless. At length, however, he answered that he had never ordered his people to take up arms against us, and he would at once send for his chief warriors and find out the truth. Saying this he loosened the seal of Huitzilopochtli which he wore round his wrist and only took from his arm when he issued orders of importance that were to be at once executed. As to our presumption in proposing to take him away from his house, he said he was astounded, that he was not one from whom we should make such a demand and he was not minded to go.

Cortes in return gave very good arguments for our having come to our conclusions, but Montezuma brought even stronger showing why he should not leave his house. In this way above half an hour went by, when Juan Velasquez de Leon, whose voice was uncommonly loud and harsh, spoke out to Cortes and in what he said expressed the feelings of the other officers impatiently sitting by, " What's the use of making so many words? He must either go quietly with us, or we cut him down on the spot. Tell him once more that if he cries out we shall kill him. On this depend our lives."

When Montezuma saw the black looks of our officers, and heard Leon's rough voice, he asked Donna Marina what the man who spoke so loud said. Marina, who, as I have before remarked, was very clever and knew well how to give a good answer, replied, " Great ruler, what I counsel is that you go at once to their quarters and build up no further difficulties. I know they will pay you every respect belonging to a great cacique. If you remain here they will cut you down."

Thereupon Montezuma turned to Cortes. " Malinche," he said, "I have a son and two daughters. Take them as hostages. Do not put such a disgrace upon me as to demand my person. What will my caciques say if they see me led off prisoner?" But Cortes answered that the monarch's own person was the only guarantee of our safety, and there was no other way of easing our minds. Finally, at the end of much more discussion, the ruler determined to go quietly with us, and as soon as he had declared his purpose, our captain and officers showed him every civility, begging him to pardon their insistence and to tell his guards and warriors that he had advised with Huitzilopochtli and his attendant papas and finally had of his own free will taken up residence in our quarters. His splendid litter which he used when he left his palace with all his suite was then brought, and he went with us to our quarters. There we placed guards over him.

The messengers through whom Montezuma summoned the warriors by the seal of Huitzilopochtli, brought the warring caciques from the coast as prisoners. What the monarch said to them when they stood before him I do not know, but in the end he sent them to Cortes for judgment. Then these unfortunate men confessed that Montezuma had commanded them to levy tribute by force of arms, and if any teules should protect those rebelling against the levy, to put them also to the sword.

Cortes sent word to the monarch that what the men said involved him also. Thereupon Montezuma fell to excusing himself; upon which our captain said that for himself he believed the warriors' confession, and that, according to the laws of our country, the ruler himself deserved punishment; yet our captain's love for him was so great that, even if he were guilty, he, Cortes, would himself pay the penalty rather than that Montezuma should suffer.

Cortes now sentenced the warriors to be burned in front of the ruler's palace, and that there might be no outbreak while the sentence was carried out, Cortes ordered Montezuma to be put in chains. Grief overcame the monarch when this was done, and he moaned, but in the end, after the execution was over, Cortes with five of his officers went to his apartment where our captain himself took off the fetters, and spoke with such affection, saying that although Montezuma was already lord of many countries he would make him master of many more, and if he now wished to go to his palace he would give him leave, that even while Cortes was speaking tears welled in the monarch's eyes and rolled down his cheeks. He answered with courtesy, knowing all he heard was mere words, that he thanked Cortes for his kindness and for the present he preferred to stay where he was.

In this way I have told how the great Montezuma was imprisoned. In our quarters his household still surrounded him and he bathed daily as was his wont in his own palace. He himself showed not the least anger at his confinement. Twenty of his chief counsellors always stayed with him. He collected tribute, settled disputes, and attended to affairs of state as before. The visiting caciques waited on him and, no matter how great the cacique, paid him the same veneration as before, taking off their fine garments, putting on those of hennequen and coming barefoot before him. Nor did they enter at the chief gate, but by a side door and approaching with their customary three prostrations and down-cast eyes and their "Lord, my Lord, my great Lord," by means of pictures drawn and painted on hennequen cloths they told him of their suit or other difficulty about which they wished to consult him, with thin sticks pointing to the different objects drawn to explain the nature of the suit and what they wanted. Two elders who were distinguished caciques stood on these occasions near Montezuma and when they had understood the pleas, they told Montezuma the arguments and the monarch in a few words pronounced his judgment. With three deep bows, and without uttering a syllable or turning their backs, the parties to the suit then retired, and once out of the presence of Montezuma put on their rich garments and went strolling through Mexico.

When Mexican chiefs and his nephews called upon Montezuma they asked the reasons for his imprisonment, and if they should make war and free him. If he were once, they said, outside our quarters, the people would rise up in arms. But he answered that he did not wish sedition in the city, and if he did not join them they would want to put a new ruler in his place; and he silenced them by saying he was doing himself the pleasure of staying a few days with us, and when he wished to complain he would tell them; and that they must not stir up the people or make any trouble, for this visit of his was with the consent of the god Huitzilopochtli whom certain papas had consulted.

All the entertainment we could think of Cortes and every one of us brought forward, and on the whole Montezuma became fairly content with the attention we showed him and he continually felt greater delight in our company. Whenever any of us were with him we doffed our helmets and bore ourselves with most marked civility, and he treated us with greatest politeness. Our captain was a man who thought carefully in all things, as I have said, and now he strove that the monarch might not feel his imprisonment too deeply. Therefore every morning, after we had said our prayers, Cortes accompanied by four officers went to ask how he was, and what he would like, until the monarch one day declared that his confinement did not weary him because our gods had given us power to take him prisoner and Huitzilopochtli had agreed to it.

Sometimes Montezuma and Cortes played at a game the Mexicans call totoloc. It is played with smooth small balls, which here were made of gold, pitched at certain slabs. Five throws made up the game and gold and silver trinkets were the stakes. I still remember that once Pedro de Alvarado was scoring for Cortes, and one of his nephews, a noted cacique, for the monarch, and Alvarado always marked one more point than Cortes had gained. Upon this Montezuma observed, courteously and laughingly, that he was not exactly pleased with the way Tonatio (so they called Alvarado) kept the count, because he made so much ixoxol in his score — which in their speech means that he cheated, in that he always marked one score too many.

In those days I was quite a young fellow and whenever I was sentinel in his apartment I behaved with such respect that he inquired who I was and sent me offer of a present. I thanked him for his kindness and hoped God would bless him. When the interpreter gave my answer, Montezuma said, " Bernal Diaz seems to me to have the feelings of a well-bred man," and to his gift he added three plates of gold and two packages of cotton stuffs.

Of a morning it was his habit to say his prayers the first thing and make sacrifice to his gods. He then took his breakfast, which was a light meal, for he ate only chili peppers and no meat. After this he gave audience for an hour to those caciques who, as I have told, came from a distance to lay disputes before him and have his judgment. The rest of the day he spent in amusement, particularly with his wives. So Montezuma passed his time with us, now and then laughing, now and then reflecting on his imprisonment.

After the execution of the Mexican warriors and Montezuma had worn our fetters, our captain determined to despatch a man of good presence, who was also an excellent musician, Alonzo de Grado, to Vera Cruz with the powers of lieutenant. Grado was one of those who had always opposed our going on to Mexico, and who fomented dissatisfaction during our stay in Tlaxcala and insisted on our return to the coast. If he had been as good a soldier as he was a man of good address, his conduct of affairs would have been different. Even Cortes, in giving him the appointment said rather jokingly, " Alonzo de Grado, you now are having fulfilled your wish of going to Vera Cruz. There you will labor at building the fortress. But keep out of warlike expeditions, and don't get killed as Juan de Escalante did." In saying this Cortes winked his eye at us soldiers who were standing round, as much as to say that we knew Grado would not go on such an expedition unless dragged there by the hair of his head. Cortes particularly desired him to watch most zealously over interests of the settlers at Vera Cruz, and not allow any ill-treatment of the Indians. But heeding in no way this excellent advice, Grado troubled himself little about completing the fortress, and spent all his time in feasting and gambling. Cortes, therefore, sent Gonzalo de Sandoval, who had been chief constable since the death of Escalante, to despatch Grado to Mexico under a guard of Indians; and to forward also the two blacksmiths of the town with all their bellows, tools and much iron from the ships we had destroyed — such as two heavy iron chains, and also sails, pitch, and a mariner's compass, in short everything needed to build two sloops with which we might sail the lake of Mexico.

When the material for the sloops had come, Cortes at once told Montezuma that he wished to build two small pleasure yachts, and asked leave to send carpenters to cut oak timber growing about sixteen miles away. Many Indian carpenters helped, and soon the boats were done and their masts and rigging set, even to an awning to keep off the heat of the sun. Both turned out to be uncommonly fast sailers, for Martin Lopez, our carpenter who modeled them, was a master in his craft as well as a good soldier.

When Montezuma heard the yachts were launched, he sent word to Cortes that he wanted to go hunting on an island where he had a game preserve. In that place no one but Montezuma, not even a cacique, dared hunt. Cortes answered that there were no objections to the monarch's going, but if his warriors and priests formed any plan of seizing him, his life would be in danger, and that he should go in our yachts or sloops, which were swifter and safer than canoes. This offer vastly pleased Montezuma and he went on board with a large suite, Cortes ordering four officers and two hundred of our troops to accompany him and watch narrowly the person of the monarch. That day there was a stiff breeze blowing and we were able to work the sails so well that the boats went flying across the lake. Royal huntsmen followed in canoes which, notwithstanding numbers of rowers, could not keep up with us but fell far behind. This greatly amused Montezuma and he said it showed great skill, our combining of the power of sails and oars. At the island Montezuma made vast slaughter of deer, hares and rabbits and returned quite contented. As we neared the city our officers ordered the cannon fired, and this gave the monarch new pleasure. Indeed we found him so open and frank that we had genuine pleasure in treating him with the respect in which he was held by his own people.

If I were to tell the veneration and service paid him by all the caciques of the country, I should find no end. Not a thing he wished that was not brought, even if it were on the wing. For instance, one day when some of us were with him a hawk swooped down through an open hall upon a quail; for the Indian steward who had charge of cleaning our rooms kept some quail and pigeons. When the hawk seized and carried off its quarry, one of our men cried, "What a fine hawk! and how well he flew!" We all united in saying how capital it was, and that the country abounded in birds for hawking. Montezuma observing our lively talk asked what we were saying; and when the interpreter explained that if we had such a bird we would teach it to fly from the hand and attack any bird of any size and kill it, the monarch said, "Then I will have this very hawk caught, and we shall see if you can teach it and hunt with it." Upon this we all doffed our caps and thanked him for his kindness. He at once summoned his bird-catchers and told them to bring that hawk. Before the hour of the Ave Maria they actually brought the very bird. So it was, even now, in his confinement, his subjects stood in such awe of him that if he expressed wish for them, they brought him birds that flew in the skies above.

CHAPTER XIII

How Montezuma visited the chief temple; his nephew, Cacamatzin, conspired against him; and finally how the caciques swore allegiance to our king; what the Spaniards whom Cortes sent out to find gold, reported. Montezuma's gift of the vast treasure of his fathers and its division among us.

In these days, also, Montezuma told Cortes that he wished to pay his devotions and make sacrifices at his chief temple, not only in fulfilling his religious duties but also to convince his caciques, and especially his nephews, who daily begged him to permit them to rescue him, that by his own choice and the consent of Huitzilopochtli he stayed with us. Cortes told him he might go and welcome, but if the caciques and papas should attack our soldiers or make any disorder to release him, our men would at once take his life. Moreover, he must not sacrifice any human being, for that was a sin against the true God we had made known to him. Neither could Cortes refrain from adding that it would be better for him to pray before our altars and the image of Our Lady.

Montezuma pledged that he would not sacrifice any humans, and then set out in pomp of state, on his litter, with many caciques carrying his staff of authority in front of him, and with four of our officers, scores of our soldiers, and Padre de Olmedo to hold him to his pledge about sacrifices. When we neared the temple of Huitzilopochtli, his nephews and other chieftains assisted the monarch from his litter and carried him on their shoulders, all the caciques in reverence keeping their eyes on the ground as he passed. At the foot of the temple many papas waited to aid him in mounting the steps. The monarch was not long at his devotions and went back appearing in better spirits, and giving each of us who had gone with him presents of gold. But we found that the night before the papas had sacrificed four Indians in spite of all our captain and Padre de Olmedo had done and said. All we could now do was to feign ignorance of their deed, for Montezuma's nephews, intent on rebellion, had roused Mexico and other great towns.

The good reader will recall that some chapters back I told how Montezuma's nephew, Cacamatzin, lord of Texcoco, the largest town in all that country after Mexico, came toward us four hundred Spaniards as we drew near the capital city and, with show of regal pomp, bade us welcome in behalf of his uncle. When this prince now knew that with Montezuma imprisoned we were taking all the power we could get — even that we had opened, although we had not taken anything from it, the chamber where lay the treasure of his grandfather — he determined to end our dominion. He called to council all the caciques who were his vassals, and with them relatives who were princes of other towns and provinces, especially the lord of Matalcingo, a man of courage, so nearly related to Montezuma that many said he was the rightful heir to the monarchy.

While Cacamatzin was negotiating with these chieftains to fix a day when they should fall upon us with their united armies, the cacique of Matalcingo said that if Cacamatzin would assure him of his elevation to the throne, he and all his relatives and all his people would be the first to take up arms and turn us out of the city, or put us to the sword. Cacamatzin answered the cacique of Matalcingo, however, that the crown belonged to him as nephew of Montezuma and, if he of Matalcingo did not wish to join, himself, Cacamatzin and all the others would be able to overcome us without his aid. Of all this Montezuma duly received intelligence from the aggrieved cacique of Matalcingo.

The monarch, extremely prudent and unwilling to see his city in blood and rebellion, told Cortes of the conspiracy, of which we had, indeed, heard in general terms. The advice of Cortes was that Montezuma should put his Mexican troops under our captain's command and we should fall upon Texcoco and destroy the town. It was clear this advice did not suit the monarch, and Cortes sent Cacamatzin word that we wished to have him for a friend, but if he began war it would mean his death. He was a young hotbrain, however, this Cacamatzin, and others of the same sort strengthened him in his opinions, and he sent haughty answers to all the warnings our captain offered. At length, when his insolence had become too gross for endurance, when Montezuma had sent trustworthy messengers begging Cacamatzin to come and confer with him, saying the abiding in our quarters lay wholly with himself and Malinche had twice told him to return to his own palace, but he had refused to go because the papas had said he must stay with us, if he would not be a dead man — and when Cacamatzin had again summoned his caciques and in a haughty and traitorous speech had assured them that he would kill us all within four days, and his uncle, Montezuma, had a rabbit's heart, otherwise he would have attacked us as we were coming down the mountains, as he had advised him doing — and after many plans and promises of what he, Cacamatzin, would do for their enriching when he should get the lordship of Mexico — and after the caciques had refused to join him in his traitorous design, and he had sent word to Montezuma that he might have spared himself asking him, Cacamatzin, to make friends with those who had done the monarch dishonor, possible only because we were enchanters and had stolen away his reason and energy by wizardry given us by our gods and the great Spanish Lady whom we called our protectress — only after Montezuma had heard and considered his nephew's insolence and excesses, did he give trusted caciques his seal and orders to go to Texcoco and seize and bring the young hothead to Mexico. When this was accomplished, Cacamatzin became the prisoner of Cortes.

From all this the reader may well imagine on how short a thread our lives hung. Every day we heard nothing but how they were planning to cut us off to a man and eat our flesh. The mercy of God was all that saved us. To God alone were we indebted that the excellent Montezuma furthered our affairs. How great a ruler he was! — that his subjects, even in his confinement, faithfully obeyed his commands! In everything we saw him do he was indeed a great monarch, and we not only treated him with respect, we really loved him, and told him of the power of our king; and Padre de Olmedo spoke to him constantly about our holy religion.

When all the cities were again at peace, Cortes reminded Montezuma that, before we entered Mexico, he had offered to pay tribute to our king, and that now he understood our king's power, and the number and magnificence of his vassals, it would be well if he and his subjects gave their pledge and tribute.

Montezuma said he would gather his caciques and advise with them. Within ten days he had assembled nearly all those of the country round about. The cacique of Matalcingo, however, most nearly related to Montezuma, as I have said, and probable successor of the monarch, did not come. He sent word that he was unable to pay tribute and so would not come to the meeting — in fact, on what he got from his province he was scarcely able to live himself. Angry at this answer, Montezuma sent warriors to take the cacique prisoner, but he, warned of the approach of the band, fled to the interior of his province and kept himself out of reach.

To the other caciques Montezuma recalled the tradition handed down by their forefathers, written down in their books of records, that a people should some day come from the quarter where the sun rose to rule their lands and end the Mexican dominion; those men he believed were we; the papas had asked Huitzilopochtli about it and had offered sacrifices, but the gods no longer answered as they used to do; all that they could conclude was that what Huitzilopochtli had told them before he meant as his answer now, and now they must take his meaning to be that they should give their pledge to the king of Spain, whose subjects these teules were.

" For the present," continued Montezuma, " we cannot do otherwise. We must wait and see if our gods hereafter give a better answer. For the present I wish and beg you to give some proof of allegiance. I ask that no one refuse. Malinche has importuned me on this point. During the eighteen years I have been your ruler you have been loyal to me. I have broadened your territories and given you wealth. If I am now captive, it is because the great Huitzilopochtli has willed it."

After this reasoning and statement of Montezuma, the caciques declared that they would do as he wished, but they broke into tears, and Montezuma himself wept most of all. The next day, in the presence of Cortes and his officers, they gave their pledge to our king, all in the same deep grief of yesterday. Even we ourselves, from the love we bore Montezuma, were softened at the sight of his tears, and wept with him. We strove to redouble our attentions to him, and our captain with the Padre de Olmedo scarcely left him a moment.

One day Cortes was, as usual, sitting with Montezuma, when through our interpreters, Donna Marina and Aguilar, he asked of the monarch where the mines were, and the rivers, in which they found their gold, and by what method they collected what they had brought him in dust. Our captain said he wanted to send out two of his men proficient in mining.

The gold, Montezuma replied, came mostly from a province, Zacatula, on the south coast, ten or twelve days' journey from Mexico. There they washed the earth in gourds and the gold sank to the bottom of the vessel. Then they also brought him gold from another province, Tustepec, near where we had landed on the north coast, where natives gathered it from beds of rivers and also worked good mines in a land near by not subject to him. If Cortes wished to send some of his men there, Montezuma continued, he would give caciques to go with them. Thanking the monarch for his offer, Cortes dispatched Gonzalo de Umbria to Zacatula, and a young officer, Pizarro (Peru was still unknown), to the mines in the north. Soldiers accompanied each officer, who was given forty days to go and return.

At this time, too, the great Montezuma gave our captain a hennequen cloth on which draughtsmen had very accurately painted all the rivers and bays along the coast from Panuco to Tabasco, for towards a distance of five hundred and sixty miles, and also the river Coatzacoalcos. We knew well all the harbors and bays described on the cloth from our voyage with Grijalva, but we knew little of the Coatzacoalcos, which the Mexicans said was broad and deep. Cortes determined to send some one to take soundings at its mouth and learn what sort of country was about it. Diego de Ordas, a man of intelligence and courage and one of our officers, proffered his service and asked for soldiers and caciques to keep him company. Cortes was loth to part with Ordas, for a man of such good counsel he wished to keep near. But at last, in order not to displease him, our captain gave consent. Montezuma then cautioned the officer to be on his guard, for the people of that country were very warlike and not subject to him, and therefore if harm should befall him, he, the monarch, should not suffer reproach; on the frontiers, before entrance to the province, he would meet garrisons of Mexican warriors, and if he, Ordas, had need of them, he should take them for his company.

The first to return to the City of Mexico were Gonzalo de Umbria and his comrades, who brought upwards of three hundred dollars in grains. The caciques of the provinces, according to Umbria's account, had taken many people to two rivers and in small vessels washed the earth and collected the gold. If clever miners were to work in the rivers, he thought, and the earth washed as they washed it in Santo Domingo and Cuba, these would prove rich mines. Two caciques of the province accompanied Umbria, and they, pledging themselves as vassals of our king, brought a present worth about two hundred dollars. Cortes was as much pleased with the gold as if it had been thirty thousand dollars, for it assured him that good mines lay in that province, and he treated the chiefs so kindly, giving them green glass beads and promises, that they went back to their homes well contented. From what we saw it was evident that Umbria and his companions had not forgotten themselves in their journey, for they came back with pouches stuffed with gold.

Neither did Diego de Ordas return with empty hands. He likewise passed through large towns, where all the people paid him respect. But he met endless complaints of the cruelties and robberies of the Mexican troops stationed on the borders, and the caciques who were with him threatened that if the garrisons continued their misconduct, they should tell Montezuma, who would send them condign punishment. At the mouth of the Coatzacoalcos Ordas found a depth of three fathoms, but further up the river became deeper and more navigable. Here also Ordas received pledges from the people declaring themselves vassals of our king, and again he heard bitter complaints of Montezuma and his garrisons of warriors. Cortes and all of us joyfully received his return and report that the country was well adapted for cattle-breeding and farming, and the harbor, although full of shallows, excellently placed for trade with Cuba, Santo Domingo and Jamaica.

With respect to Pizarro, he came back with only one soldier, but he brought over a thousand grains of gold. In the province of Tustepec, he said, and other neighboring districts, many Indians went with him to the rivers and gathered gold, two thirds of which he gave for their labor. Higher up in the hills many Indians, armed with bows, arrows, lances and shields much better than ours, had come out to meet him, declaring no Mexican should set foot in their territory, but the teules might come and welcome. Here, when the people wash for gold, the dust comes out in curly shape. Pizarro brought also caciques from that country who, bearing a present of gold, told how their people held the Mexicans in abhorrence and offered themselves as vassals of the king.

Cortes received Pizarro and the caciques with pleasant speeches and after he assured the caciques that they might rely on our friendship to serve them at all times, he dismissed them with two Mexican chiefs to see them in safety to their borders. Our captain now asked Pizarro what had become of the other soldiers he had taken in his company. Pizarro answered that he had ordered them to remain behind, for the soil seemed so fertile, the mines so rich, the people so peaceful, that he wished them to form a settlement and lay out farms for growing cacao, maize, and cotton, and breeding cattle, and to go about and examine the gold mines. Cortes said nothing at the time, but we heard later that in private he severely upbraided Pizarro for having exceeded his instructions, saying it showed a low disposition to wish to be employed in such things as breeding cattle and planting cacao, and he at once dispatched a soldier, Alonzo Luis, to summon immediately to Mexico the Spaniards Pizarro had left behind.

The samples of gold and accounts that all the country was rich led our captain, after deliberating with Ordas and other officers and soldiers, to say to Montezuma that all the caciques and towns under his rule should pay tribute to our king, and that he, most wealthy of all, should give from his treasure. Montezuma replied that he would ask all his towns for gold, but many would be able at best to give but trifling trinkets inherited from their forefathers. He then dispatched caciques, ordering each town where the gold mines were to give as many gold bars, and of the same weight, as they were wont to pay to him. He sent two bars as a sample.

Within twenty days the messengers came back. The monarch then summoned Cortes and our officers, and several of us whom he knew from our standing sentinel in his apartments, and said, " Malinche, and other officers and soldiers, I am greatly indebted to your great king for his having thought it worth his effort to send from such distant countries to make inquiries after me. But the thought that most deeply impresses me is that he must be the one who is to rule over us, according to the saying we have from our ancestors and confirmed by the answers of our gods. Therefore, take this gold for him. I have no more, for our notice to collect was short. For my share I give the whole of my father's treasure secreted in your quarters. I know that as soon as you came you saw it, and that you sealed up the opening as before. When, however, you forward this treasure to your king, say in your letter, 'This is sent you by your faithful vassal, Montezuma.' To this I will add a few chalchihuites of such enormous value that I could not give them to any save your great king. Each stone is worth two loads of gold. I also wish to send him three blow guns, with their balls and bags, for they are so rich in jewels they will certainly please him. I should like to give him all I possess, but I now have little left, for most of my gold and jewels I gave to you."

When Cortes and the rest of us heard this we stood amazed at the generosity and goodness of the monarch, and we took off our helmets and spoke our thanks. Cortes promised him in words of greatest affection that he would write our king of the splendid presents. Nor did Montezuma delay. That very hour his house stewards handed over the wealth of the secret chamber. So vast was the heap of it that we were three days in bringing it from its corners, and looking it over, and taking it from the embroideries on which it was set. To aid us we were obliged to call in Montezuma's goldsmiths, who had a town of their own near Mexico.

There was indeed so much that when the articles were taken to pieces the gold alone, not counting the silver, was found to be worth more than six hundred thousand dollars, not including the gold given in tribute by the towns. All this treasure we ordered the goldsmiths to melt down, and they made bars of it about three fingers of the hand across. Of the other presents of immense value — the chalchihuite stones, the blow guns set with pearls and jewels, the plumes and feathers and other things — they were so rich and splendid that it would not be an easy task to describe them. At once Cortes ordered made an iron stamp bearing the royal arms of Spain, and all the gold I have spoken about was marked with the stamp, except that set with rich jewels, such as we were loth to take to pieces.

First of all, one fifth of the treasure was set apart for the king, and Cortes said another fifth should be set aside for him, as we had promised at the sand dunes when we chose him our captain general. After that, he said what he had spent in fitting out the expedition in Cuba should be taken from the heap; and also the sum due Diego Velasquez for the ships we had destroyed; and then again the travelling expenses of the agents we had sent to Spain. Next we should deduct the shares of the seventy men who stayed behind in Vera Cruz, and the value of the horse of Cortes that had died, and the value of the mare of Sedeno which the Tlaxcalans had killed. Then for the two priests, the officers, and those who brought horses there must be double shares, and also for the musketeers and crossbowmen the same. So the nibbling went on till very little remained to each soldier as a share, and the share itself was such a trifle that many would not take it and it fell to Cortes. We could do nothing but hold our tongues. What would it have availed to ask justice? Some soldiers took their shares rated at one hundred dollars, and then made such a noise that Cortes secretly bribed them with presents and smooth speeches. A number had their purses so full that it was not long before trinkets and bars of gold were in open circulation; and heavy gambling began after Pedro Valenciano cut out and painted some playing cards from parchment, or drum skins. Many of the officers employed Montezuma's goldsmiths to work out for their wear heavy gold chains, and Cortes had made among other things a great dinner service of plate.

One single instance will show the feeling the unfair division of the gold roused in our men. Among us was a seaman named Cardenas, who had left in Spain, while he was out seeking their livelihood, a wife and children in great want. Cardenas had seen the great heap of gold in slabs, plates and dust, and when he finally found his share a mere hundred dollars, he fairly fell ill in thinking about it. Seeing him one day so low-spirited, one of his friends asked him what caused his heavy grief and sighs. "How the devil can I be otherwise?" answered Cardenas, "when I see the gold we earned with such hardships get into Cortes' hands, with his fifths, and his money for a horse that died, and the ships of Diego Velasquez, and other such tricks, while my wife and children are dying for want of food? I might have sent them a little help when our agents went to Spain, but we put in their hands all we at that time had gathered." "What gold are you speaking of?" asked his friend. "Why, that which our agents took to Spain," returned Cardenas. "If Cortes would give me my share of what is due me, my wife and children could live on it and have to spare. But Cortes makes us sign how we should send to the king, and then he sends six thousand dollars to his father, while I and other poor men fight night and day at Tabasco and Tlaxcala and Cholula, and now live with death all the time before our eyes. Cortes acts as if he were king himself, and carries off his fifths, while we remain poverty-stricken and all protest is vain." In this strain he ran on, saying we did not want too many kings, only our own. "You make yourself bitter with thoughts that avail you nothing," his comrade returned. "You know everything goes whither Cortes and his officers choose to carry it, even the food. They nearly eat themselves up, while we fare badly. But it is no use to complain. Get rid of such thoughts and pray God we do not lose our lives in this city."

Here the men had done talking, but what they said, and the like said by others, came to the ears of Cortes.* Thereupon he addressed us in a honied speech, telling us he did not want the fifth, but only the share promised him when we chose him our captain general; that the gold we had so far collected was a trifle to that which was to come from great cities and rich mines scattered through the land, enough to enrich every man of us. He used other arguments in phrases he knew so well how to form. But finding they had no effect, he secretly silenced some of the soldiers with gold, and others by great promises. He also ordered that the food furnished by Montezuma's stewards should be more justly divided, so that every man should have an equal share with himself. And then he took Cardenas aside and gave him three hundred dollars, and told him he should go back to his wife and children on the first ship that left for Spain.

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* The historian, Antonio de Solis, says that Bernal Diaz discusses the distribution of the Montezuma treasure very indecently, and wastes too much paper in enlarging upon the hardships the poor soldiers underwent in the distribution.

If Diaz could have read the criticism, he might answer Solis as he answered the licentiates who, on reading his manuscript, told him it would have been well if he had not praised himself and his comrades so liberally—"If we did not speak well of ourselves, who would? Who else witnessed our exploits and battles — unless, indeed, the clouds in the sky and the birds flying over our heads."

Gold is commonly the great desire of men, and the more they have the more they want.

CHAPTER XIV

How we set an altar on the chief temple, and the anger of the Mexican gods and people at our act; and of the fleet Velasquez sent out from Cuba, what Montezuma did about it; and our plan to go against Narvaez.

THE great Montezuma never ceased his good will towards us and did as we wished in every way save that he never stopped the sacrifice of human beings. Day after day the abomination went on. No protest could induce him to end it. The difficulty for us was to use some means which would not impel the people and the papas to arms. At last Cortes, accompanied by seven officers and soldiers, went to Montezuma and said, " Great monarch, I have already many times begged you not to sacrifice humans to those false gods who are deluding you, and yet the horrors continue every day. I have come now with these officers to ask your leave to take away the idols from your temple and put Our Lady, Santa Maria, and a cross in their stead. My men are determined to pull the idols down, and, if you will not permit us, I suppose some one or other of your priests may be killed."

When Montezuma heard these words and saw how threatening the men looked, he answered, "Alas, Malinche! why do you wish utterly to destroy the city? Already our gods are angry with us, and I can not tell what revenge they will take. Have patience till I summon the papas and know what they think."

Cortes now signed with his hand for the officers to retire, and then he told the monarch that the way to save the town from open rebellion and the idols from destruction was to grant us room for an altar and an image of Our Lady and the cross on the top of the temple. In no other way could he promise him to silence the murmurs of his men. As time went on, moreover, the Mexicans themselves would see how good and beneficial the change was for their souls and for giving them abundant harvests and other blessings.

With deep sighs and a countenance full of sorrow, Montezuma repeated that he would confer with his papas, and after much discussion between monarch and priests we gained leave to set our altars opposite the cursed idol of Huitzilopochtli, and there with heartfelt thanks to God, Padre de Olmedo chanted mass, assisted by many of our soldiers. Cortes begged Montezuma to order his papas not to touch the altar; and at the same time our captain appointed an old soldier to be the altar's cleaner and curator, to burn incense, to keep wax candles lighted night and day, and from time to time to decorate it with fresh branches and flowers.

From the very moment we set this altar and cross on the great temple, the gods Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca seemed to speak to the priests and tell them they wished to leave the country — the teules had treated them with such contempt they could not stay in the same spot with that image and cross. The gods further said that the gold which used to be kept for their honor was now broken up and melted into bars, and we, with five caciques in chains, were lording it over the land. If they were to remain in Mexico, we must be killed. This was the last they would say on the matter.

In order that Cortes and all of us should know this momentous decision, Montezuma sent word that he wished to speak with him, and when our captain hastened to the monarch, he said, " How grieved I am at the command our gods have given our papas and me and all my people. For they say we must make war on you, and kill you, or drive you back to the sea. I advise you to leave this city at once, before you are attacked. Do not fail to do this. Remember your lives are at stake."

Cortes and his officers were not a little disturbed, especially by the monarch's insistence that our lives were in danger. But they hid their fears, and Cortes, thanking Montezuma for his warning, added that he had no ships in which to sail, and even if we did leave the country we must take with us the monarch to meet our king, and therefore he begged that Montezuma would restrain the priests and chieftains till we had built three ships on the sand dunes — this would be the wiser course, for if they began war on us we should certainly kill them all. That the monarch might see he purposed to carry out what he said, he further asked that carpenters be sent with two of our soldiers to cut wood near the coast.

When Montezuma heard that he was to go with us he was more dispirited than ever. Still he said he would send the carpenters with orders to work, not talk, and would command the papas and caciques not to raise the town to rebellion, for they might for the time being appease Huitzilopochtli with sacrifices, but not of human lives. After this exciting interview we were all in anxiety wondering when they would begin their attack.

At once Cortes sent for Martin Lopez and other ship carpenters, and after some discussion about the size of the three vessels to be built, he ordered them to march to Vera Cruz, where every necessary thing in iron, rigging, tar and tow was ready, and there to set to work. In all haste they obeyed, cutting the wood on the coast near Vera Cruz.

Let us leave them building the ships and tell how, back in the city of Mexico, we grew more alarmed and expected attack any moment. Our friends from Tlaxcala and Donna Marina said it was probable, and we all kept on the alert and narrowly watched Montezuma. I must here, and for the last time, say that neither by night nor day did we take off our armor or leggings. We even slept in them with our weapons in our hands. Our beds were a bundle of straw and a mat. Our horses stood saddled and bridled. In short, every soldier was ready for action at a moment's notice. Sentinels were posted and each of us in turn had at least one watch every night.

Another thing, but I do not mention it in praise of myself: I grew so accustomed to living in armor day and night that after the conquest of New Spain I kept to the habit of sleeping in my clothes, and without a bed, and I slept better in soldier fashion than on a down bed. Even now, in my old age, when I visit the towns of my commendary,* I do not take a bed, and if I do take one it is because the gentlemen who go with me may not think I take no bed because I have no good one. And from continuous watching at night I am only able to sleep for a short time together, and have to get up at intervals and take a couple of turns in the open air and look at the stars, and this I do without wearing a cap or kerchief round my head, and I am so used to it that, thank God, it does me no harm. I tell all this that it may be known how we, the true conquistadores, lived and how wonted we were to arms and keeping guard.

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* Land and Indian towns given a Spaniard in those days often as reward for services.

From our watch in the great city of Mexico we have now to turn our thoughts back a little. When Diego Velasquez, the governor of Cuba, learned that we had sent agents to our king, with all the gold we had received — the gold sun, the silver moon, and many jewels and the metal from the mines — he also heard that the bishop of Burgos, who favored him, had treated our agents badly. The bishop, report went, then sent help to Velasquez, and advised and even commanded him to fit out an expedition against us and have us captured — promising that he, the bishop, would fully support Velasquez before our king.

With such backing the governor of Cuba got together a fleet of nineteen ships, carrying fourteen hundred soldiers, above twenty cannon, and stores of powder, balls and gun-flints. Then they also had eighty horsemen, ninety crossbowmen and seventy musketeers. Fat and heavy as he was, Velasquez had in the warmth of his wrath visited every town in Cuba to hasten the provisioning of the ships, and to invite settlers to join Panfilo de Narvaez and have the honor of taking Cortes and the rest of us prisoners, or at least blowing out our brains. After such a send-off Narvaez sailed across the sea with all his fleet. A north wind struck him one night and foundered one vessel of small burden, but the other ships came safely to the harbor of San Juan de Ulua.

When the arrival of the fleet became known to three soldiers whom Cortes had sent out in search of gold mines, these men, Cervantes, Escalona and Alonzo Carretero, did not hesitate a moment to go to Narvaez' ship; and as soon as they found themselves on board, and had partaken the food and wine given them, they praised the Almighty for delivering them from the power of Cortes and the city of Mexico. "How much better to be drinking wine here than slaving under Cortes," they cried, "with no rest night or day, daring scarcely speak a word, and death staring us in the face!" And Cervantes, a low buffoon, exclaimed, "O Narvaez, Narvaez, what a fortunate man that you came at this time when the traitor Cortes has got together more than seven hundred thousand dollars of gold, and all his men are enraged because he has taken a greater part of the gold and they will not accept what he offers them." So these worthless fellows told Narvaez more than he wished to know.

The great Montezuma soon learned that these ships, with many soldiers on board, had anchored in the port, and he secretly, without a word to Cortes, sent some of his caciques to bear presents of gold and furnish food from neighboring villages. Narvaez, in turn, sent word to Montezuma that Cortes and all the rest of us were nothing but a parcel of thieves and vagabonds who had fled from Spain without the permission of our king, and when his majesty had heard that we were here, and knew of the robberies and other ill deeds we had done, and that we had taken Montezuma prisoner, he ordered Narvaez to set out with all these ships, soldiers and horses and end our disorders, free the monarch, and put Cortes and all the rest of us evil-workers to the sword or take us alive and send us to Spain, where sure death awaited us.

Montezuma heard this message with natural satisfaction, particularly the part telling how many ships, horses, cannon, musketeers and crossbowmen the new fleet had. He believed they would take us prisoners. In addition, when the monarch's messengers saw the three treacherous rascals who had deserted to Narvaez, and perceived they said evil of Cortes, they found more reason to believe the scandal Narvaez had told. They brought back to Montezuma a picture of the fleet accurately painted on cloth, and he thereupon sent Narvaez more gold and cotton stuffs, and ordered all the towns in the neighborhood to supply the Spaniard with plenty of food.

Three whole days the monarch was in possession of this news and Cortes knew nothing about it. One day, however, when our captain went to pay his usual visit, he said to Montezuma that it seemed to him he looked in particularly good spirits, and he asked the monarch how it was. Montezuma answered that he felt better than he had for some time. Astonished at this sudden change, Cortes called again the same day, and the monarch then feared he knew about the ships, and to turn aside suspicion he said, "Malinche, I have just this moment heard that eighteen ships and a great number of troops and horses have come to port where you landed. It has all been painted on cloth and sent me. You have come twice to-day, and doubtless this time you bring me the news. Now you will have no need to build ships. Because you did not tell me of it I may have felt hurt, yet I am delighted at the arrival of your brothers, for you can go back to Spain now. This removes all difficulties."

When Cortes heard this and saw the paintings on the cloth he exclaimed in delight, "Thank God! who at the right time sends aid for us!" As for us — we soldiers were so rejoiced that we could not keep quiet, and our horsemen galloped about firing salute after salute. Cortes, however, saw plainly that Diego Velasquez had sent the fleet against him and against all of us; and he said what he felt about it to us, and by rich presents and promises he won our pledge to stand by him.

Our captain, I have said, was a man who exercised such care and forethought that the smallest advantage did not escape him, and whatever difficulty he might be in he managed to put right. The facts must not be forgotten, however, that he had the good fortune to have trustworthy officers and soldiers who not only brought a powerful arm to battle, but also aided him with prudent advice. At that time, in the way of council, we all agreed that he should at once send letters by Indian couriers to Narvaez, in the most friendly way offering our services to do what he should command, and begging him not to excite rebellion in the land or permit the Indians to see any enmity among us. We wrote in this friendly tone because our numbers were so very small in comparison with his, and in order to get his good will and learn how he was inclined.

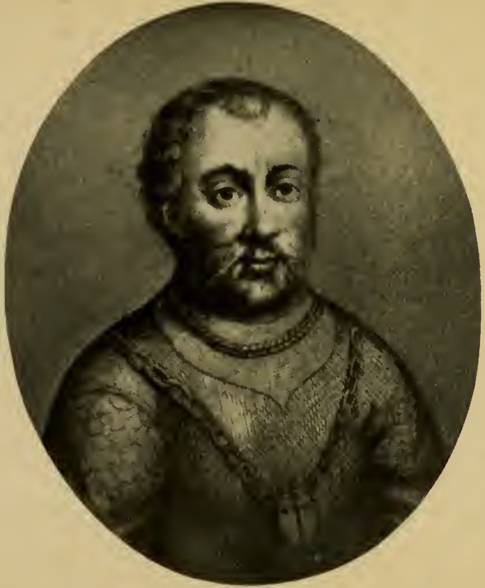
This letter of Cortes' sent by the courier duly reached Narvaez, and he for his part went about showing it to his officers and making merry at it, and even at us. One of his officers, named Salvatierra, reproved him, it was said, for even reading a letter from such a traitor as Cortes, saying he ought to march against us and not leave one of us alive; for his own, Salvatierra's, self, he swore, he would cut off Cortes' ears and roast and eat them. Other such brutality was rife.

From ourselves at Mexico, likewise, Cortes despatched our Padre de Olmedo carrying a stock of persuasive articles of gold and precious stones, and to tell how Cortes wished for peace and friendship. But upon Olmedo's arriving and calling upon him Narvaez refused to listen, and called us all traitors. When Olmedo replied that on the contrary we were most faithful servants of the king, Narvaez grossly insulted him. It was then the padre secretly distributed the gold to those Cortes had named, and won over the chief officers to our side.

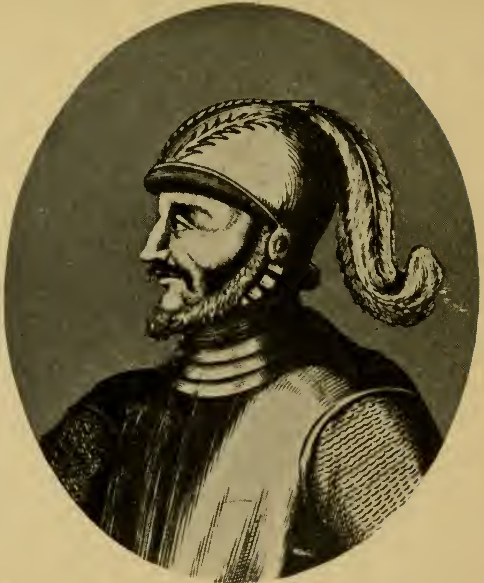
Cortes, receiving daily letters from the camp of Narvaez, and from Sandoval at Vera Cruz, learned that Narvaez had sent the royal auditor a prisoner to Spain, and thrown in chains others who spoke of us as deserving men, and that fearing like treatment, five officers had gone over to Sandoval. Finally we heard that Narvaez had stated his intention shortly to go in person to Mexico and take us prisoners. When such intelligence as this reached Cortes, he promptly called together all those who were wont to advise with him and whom he knew faithful to his interests. In this council we all agreed that without waiting for any more letters, we should immediately march against Narvaez. Pedro de Alvarado was to remain in Mexico to guard Montezuma, and all the soldiers not anxious to join our expedition, and also possible partisans of Velasquez, were to stay with him.

Fortunately Cortes had ordered a supply of maize from Tlaxcala before the arrival of Narvaez, for the harvest had failed about Mexico owing to want of rain. We needed great quantity of provisions for many Tlaxcalan friends were with us. This maize and other necessities, such as fowls, now came in and we gave it in charge of Pedro de Alvarado. Further we fortified our quarters by mounting bronze cannon, and left with Alvarado all the powder we had, ten crossbowmen, fourteen musketeers, seven horsemen and in all eighty-three soldiers.

Montezuma plainly saw that our plan was to go against Narvaez, and though Cortes went to see him every day, he did not let him know that he was aware the monarch was sending gold and cloth to the newly arrived Spaniards and was ordering food delivered to them. So it happened that one day while they were discoursing as usual, Montezuma said, " Malinche, I have for some time been noticing that your officers and soldiers are disturbed, and you yourself do not come to see me as often as you used to. Your page tells me that you are about to march against your brothers who have come in the ships, and that you are going to leave Tonatio (so the Mexicans termed Alvarado) to guard me. Do tell



Pedro de Alvarado



Gonzalo de Sandoval, who ranked next to Cortes and Alvarado "in our estimation."

me if there is any way I can bear you aid in this matter. I will do it with the greatest good will. I fear for your success, for you have few teules and those who have come have five times as many. And they say they are Christians, like yourselves, and subjects of your king, and possess images and set up crosses and read mass just as you do, and everywhere they are telling that you have fled from your king and they are come to capture and put you to death. I scarce know what to think of it. One thing, however, I must tell you — use great care in what you are about to do."

In his answer Cortes told the monarch, in the most cheerful way in the world and speaking through Donna Marina who was always with him, as well as Aguilar, in these conversations, that if he had not come to tell Montezuma about this, it was because of the love he bore him and he would spare him anxiety about our departure. It was all true that the teules lately arrived were subjects of our king and Christians, but it was false to say we had fled from our king. On the contrary our great monarch had sent us to visit him, Montezuma, and send report of what had been said and done. As to what he had said about those just arrived bringing many soldiers and horses and cannon, however great their number our Lord Jesus Christ, and his blessed mother, Our Lady, would lend us strength and power superior to those bad men who had come with evil purpose. Our emperor, continued Cortes, ruled many countries and peoples differing in courage and spirit. We came from the heart of Spain, Old Castile, and the commander now at the coast from Biscay where the people speak an impure speech. Montezuma need have no anxiety about us. We should speedily come back victorious, and for the present we begged him to stay in friendship with Tonatio, and not countenance his caciques and papas in raising any rebellion, for in case they did the rebels should on our return pay with their lives. Cortes also asked the monarch to furnish anything those who stayed behind might need in the way of food.

After this our captain embraced Montezuma twice, and Montezuma also embraced Cortes, and Donna Marina significantly said to the monarch that he ought to show some sign of grief at our departure. Upon this Montezuma said he would do all Cortes had asked him and also furnish five thousand warriors to go with us. But Cortes, knowing well that they would not be forthcoming, assured him with thanks that he needed no more than, first of all, the help of God and then of his companions. Still, he begged Montezuma to see that the image of Our Lady and the cross were always decorated with fresh boughs, the wax candles burning day and night, and that he should not permit any of his priests to sacrifice human lives. To do this would be proof of his sincere friendship.

After this Cortes besought Alvarado and all the others remaining behind to take the utmost care Montezuma did not escape. We then embraced one another and, taking as little baggage as possible, set out on our journey.

CHAPTER XV

What Cortes said to a so-called notary; how he addressed us at Cempoala and we rallied to his call: our victory over Narvaez and his forces, and the surrender of mates and masters of the fleet; how the smallpox reached New Spain.

FROM Cholula our captain sent to the Tlaxcalans begging them to despatch at once five thousand warriors. To this our friends answered that if we were going to war against Indians like themselves they would gladly do so, but against teules like ourselves, and cannon and crossbows, they had no wish to fight. They accompanied their refusal, however, with as many fowls as twenty men could carry.

We kept on our way, ready at a moment's notice for battle. Our scouts with two of our soldiers, trustworthy and swift of foot, were always a day's journey ahead of us, lurking in paths where horses could not go, to hear from Indians about the newly arrived troops, and on the lookout to seize any strollers from Narvaez' camp. It was not long before they came upon five Spaniards, and sent us word they were approaching. As the new arrivals came near they made profound bows and our captain dismounted when their chief, Alonzo de Mata, said he was a notary and wished to serve a decree he had brought. Cortes interrupted him and asked if he were a king's notary. Mata said yes. Cortes then ordered him to show his appointing paper, and if it were regular he was at liberty to read his message, and he, our captain, would then know what was due him in the service of God and his majesty. But if he, Mata, had not brought the original appointment signed by the king, it was useless for him to read the paper.

Mata was not a little staggered at this demand, for he really was no notary. He was fairly dumbfounded, and the four men with him equally. Cortes overlooked their embarrassment and ordered food set before them, for we were then halting a few moments. Further he told them we were marching to Tanpaniguita, not far from the camp of Narvaez, and there he could be found if they had any communication to make. In all he said Cortes spoke not a word of reproach against Narvaez, and after he had had a private talk with the men and had thrust a few pieces of gold into their hands, they went back to their camp sounding the praises of Cortes and of all of us. While they were with us many of our soldiers out of pure love of display hung gold collars and chains round their necks and arms. All this made great impression on the five men, and they told such wonderful stories of our riches in their camp that many of the officers wanted to make peace with Cortes.

As soon as our troops arrived at Tanpaniguita we despatched that remarkably shrewd man, Padre de Olmedo, with a letter to Narvaez. Towards the commander the friar comported himself in a particularly humble manner, but he made secret overtures to a number of gentlemen and gave some of them bars of gold. We also sent other skilful mediators. But, to pass briefly their work, let me say that in the end all negotiations proved useless, and finally we continued our march to Cempoala and halted in a beautiful meadow skirting a brook, about four miles from the town. We now posted sentinels of entirely trustworthy men, and Cortes assembled us round him, as he sat on horseback, and begging a few minutes' silence, spoke to us in this wise:

"You well know that Diego Velasquez, governor of Cuba, named me captain general — but not because there are not many gentlemen among you worthy of the post — and that you left Cuba thinking you were coming to settle in this country. I was preparing to act up to the publication, and was ready to return to Cuba and render account to Diego Velasquez, when your honors ordered — yes, compelled me to form a settlement here in the name of our emperor, a settlement that, thanks to God, has so far succeeded. You then made me your captain general and chief justice of New Spain, to continue vested in such powers till our king should order otherwise. Once there was talk among some of you of return to Cuba; but this I need not mention, it is past history, and our determination to stay here has proved a service to God and our king.

" Above all I must remind you of what we promised when we forwarded gold, silver, jewels and other valuable things we had acquired, and sent his majesty report and story of our doings, how we begged the king, since this land was of vast extent and rich in mines and cities, not to give it away to be governed by an agent or any partisan of the bishop of Burgos, but that it was good and proper to bestow it on some great prince. Now, you well remember, gentlemen, how often we have been at the point of death in battles we have fought. You all know how we are wonted to hunger and hardships, sleeping on bare ground in rain and snow and never laying aside our arms. Fifty comrades who have died in our wars I can not refer to; indeed I make no mention how all of us are maimed with wounds, some not even yet healed. I remind you of the troubles when we were still at sea, of the battle of Tabasco, how nigh we were to total destruction in battle at Tlaxcala, how we had hardly taken breath when we found at Cholula that they had made ready the pots in which to cook our flesh for a feast. No one of us can ever forget our march through the mountain passes where Montezuma had posted troops to exterminate us, and had blocked the road with felled trees. Still, we marched into Mexico and quartered ourselves in the very heart of the great city. And how often since then has death stood before our eyes!

"You who came here twice before I did — look at the hardships you underwent in discovering these lands, the miseries you suffered. I can not speak in detail of this for night is now fast approaching. But see now, gentlemen, how Panfilo de Narvaez comes tearing along with fury and desire to get us in his power, calling us thieves and vagabonds and sending messages to the great Montezuma, not in the manner of a prudent captain but in that of a rebellious mischief-maker. Consider how already he has declared war of extermination against us, just as if we were a troop of Moors.

"Up to this moment," continued Cortes, "we have fought to defend our lives, but now we have to fight for our lives and our honor, for our enemies have nothing less in mind than to capture us and rob us of all we have gained. If Narvaez and his men conquer us, which God forbid, all the services we have rendered the Almighty and our king will be turned to crimes. They will bring against us suits saying we killed, robbed and destroyed, where in truth they are the ones who rob and render ill service to our king. All this you must see with your own eyes, honest gentlemen as you are, and that we are bound to fight for the honor of our king and our own property. We lately left Mexico with confidence in God and in another, and now we bid defiance to injustice."

One and all we cried out to him that he might feel sure, we would, God aiding us, conquer or die. This rally of ours greatly rejoiced Cortes and he said that because he had confidence in us he had made the march from Mexico, and not regret but wealth and honor should be the reward of our courage. He once more begged us to remember that in war and battle, prudence and knowledge accomplish more than utmost daring, and he knew so well our great courage, how every man of us strove to be first to dash into the enemy's ranks, that he begged us to be ordered in companies. The enemy's guns were the first object for us to capture. For this he chose sixty of our youngest men, of which number I was one, and put Pizarro, a daring young man, in command — in those days neither Pizarro nor Peru were known to fame. The order was that as soon as we had captured the cannon we were to storm the quarters of Narvaez on the top of a lofty temple. To seize Narvaez himself was the duty of Sandoval and sixty men with him, Cortes promising to give three thousand dollars to the soldier who first laid hands on Narvaez, two thousand to the second, and one thousand to the third. Twenty men Cortes kept with him to hasten to whatever point aid might most be needed.

As soon as these lists were given out, Cortes again addressing us said, " I am fully aware that Narvaez has four times as many soldiers as we. But most of them are not used to arms, numbers of them are hostile to their captain, many are ill, and we shall fall on them unawares. God will give us victory. They will not oppose us for they know they will fare better with us than with Narvaez. So, gentlemen, our lives and our honor depend, after God, on your valor and strength of arm. In our hands now lies the estimate all future generations will put upon us. To die in battle is better than to live dishonored."

With this Cortes ended, for it was beginning to rain and getting late. Often since then, when thinking of his speech, I have wondered why our captain said nothing of the secret understanding he had with some of Narvaez' officers, but merely repeatedly urged the need of our employing utmost courage. I now see that by doing this he showed the prudence of a great general, for by making us feel that our only hope was in God and our own bravery, he forced us to the very limit of our valor.

We were in camp during the first part of the night, and spent our time in preparations and thinking of the task we had before us. It was useless to think of supper, for we had not a morsel to eat. We sent our scouts and posted pickets, of which I was one. I had not been standing long before a scout came up and asked me if I had heard a noise. I said no. Then came an officer and said Galleguillo, who had come over from the camp of Narvaez, was nowhere to be found, that he must have been a spy, and that Cortes ordered us at once to march to Cempoala. An instant after I heard the fife and drum, and we began our march, and at this juncture Galleguillo came to light;—the poor fellow, not used to rain and cold, had crept under some cloaks and fallen fast asleep.

Cortes now ordered drum and pipe silenced and we marched steadily forward to the river. I shall never forget our crossing the stream, how it was swollen by the rain, how slippery the stones were, and how we were encumbered by our arms. Near the river we came upon two spies, and one of them, Carrasco, when captured, cried in a loud voice, "Take care, Captain Cortes, Narvaez with all his troops is waiting for you." The other spy, Hurtado, escaping us ran giving the alarm, "To arms! to arms!" so that Narvaez calling his men and our charging with our lances happened at the same time.

We under Pizarro had the good fortune to capture the cannon before the gunners had time to fire more than four pieces, every ball of which passed over our heads save one that killed three of our comrades. Now we had gained the guns Narvaez was shooting down at us with arrows and musket-balls from the top of the temple. At this moment Sandoval came up and, in spite of Narvaez making strong resistence, he and his men made a rush to scale the steps. Seeing this and confident they had given up trying to recover the guns, we ran to Sandoval's aid. We got to him just as Narvaez had beaten him back five or six steps, and our arrival turned the scale against the enemy. With our long lances we did hard work, and when I was least expecting it we heard shouts from Narvaez, "Santa Maria, protect me! They have thrust out one of my eyes and are killing me!" At once we shouted "Victory! Victory! Narvaez is fallen!" Still, for all this, we were not able to force our way to the temple until one of us who was very tall, Martin Lopez (he of the sloop building), set fire to the straw on the top of the temple, and all the men of Narvaez came rolling down the steps. Then Pedro Farfan, a good soldier, was the first to lay hold of Narvaez, and in an instant we were shouting, "Long live the king! Long live the king! and in his royal name Cortes! Victory! Victory! Narvaez is dead!"

In the hurry of the moment we merely fastened fetters about Narvaez' legs, but now Sandoval came up and ordered him better secured. Our captain came also at the same time, and in full armor. The weather was hot and he had so heated himself, going from place to place and shouting to our soldiers and giving orders, that he was dripping with perspiration and panting for breath. Twice he said, "Where is Narvaez? What about Narvaez?" before Sandoval could understand what he was saying. "He is here, he is here, and well guarded," cried Sandoval when at last he understood. "That is all right, my son Sandoval," answered Cortes, still much out of breath, "do not leave him, nor suffer your men to go away. Keep strong guard over all the officers who are prisoners with him. I will go and see how matters stand at other points." With these words Cortes rode off to issue summons that all followers of Narvaez, under pain of death, should at once surrender themselves under the banner of the king, and in his royal name, to Hernando Cortes, captain general and chief justice.

All this took place in the night. When we forced our way into the town it was as dark as pitch, for the moon did not rise till later, and it rained heavily at intervals. But even the darkness favored us, for numbers of fire-flies kept flying about, and the soldiers of Narvaez mistook their recurrent giving off light for the matches of our fire arms, and so they gained an idea that we had a vast number of matchlocks.

Narvaez was badly wounded besides the loss of an eye, and he asked leave for his surgeon to attend his and other officers' wounds. When permission was unhesitatingly given, and the surgeon was at work, Cortes came near, unknown as he fancied, to look at his foe. Someone whispered to Narvaez that Cortes was standing by, whereupon Narvaez cried, "Captain Cortes, you may well be proud of this victory and my being a prisoner." "I am," said Cortes in answer, "in every way thankful to God for it, and likewise to these brave companions who shared it, but to defeat and capture those who dared to arrest an officer of our king is the least brilliant victory we have won in New Spain."

Broad daylight had come before a detachment of forty horsemen, whom Narvaez had sent to oppose our crossing the river, persuaded by Olid and Ordas, quietly returned. When they reached our camp drummers and fifers of Narvaez sounded their instruments and shouted, "Long live these Romans who, few in number, conquered Narvaez and his troops"; and a merry-making fellow who had come with Narvaez, a negro called Guidela, cried at the top of his voice, "Hark ye! The Romans themselves never could boast of such a victory as this!"

The forty horsemen at once came in a body to pledge themselves to Cortes who, with us standing round him, was seated in a armchair, an orange-colored robe covering his armor. The serenity and joy of his face and the gracious words he spoke as he welcomed them, were very notable. And how cheerful he was! He indeed had good cause, seeing himself that moment so raised to power. After the horsemen had given their fealty each one passed to his quarters.

I must not omit to say that Cervantes and Escalona, who had deserted to Narvaez, fared badly, for Escalona suffered severe wounds and Cervantes by order of Cortes was well whipped. Of the braggadocio, Salvatierra, his soldiers said that never in all their lives had they seen a more cowardly man, or one so alarmed at the chance of death, as when he heard the first clash of arms. And when we cried, "Victory! Victory! Narvaez is fallen!" he promptly said he was sick at the stomach and threw down his arms.

After the whole of Narvaez' troops had been disarmed, Cortes directed Francisco de Lugo to go to the port where the fleet of the defeated commander lay and order all the masters and mates of the ships to put sails, rudders and compasses ashore, so that they could not carry news to Diego Velasquez in Cuba, and to come to Cempoala. The mates and masters promptly came and pledged themselves to

Captain Cortes, and after they had taken solemn oath that they would not leave his command, he appointed a master of one of the ships, but a man Cortes trusted, Pedro Cavallero, admiral of the flotilla. Him all masters and mates were to obey. To Cavallero our captain gave orders that no ship should leave the port, and should Diego Velasquez send other ships, the admiral must seize them, send their sails, rudders and compasses on shore, and await further orders. Let us now leave the fleet.

At our headquarters these plans between ourselves and the followers of Narvaez were formed:— Leon was to proceed to the province of Panuco and form a settlement there, Cortes allotting him for the expedition one hundred followers of Narvaez with twenty of our men experienced in war; with two ships to explore the coast and the river Panuco. Another one hundred and twenty soldiers of like proportion between us and the raw recruits were to go under command of Ordas to settle in the region of Coatzacoalcos. Ordas also was to have two ships to despatch from the river to the island of Jamaica for mares, calves, pigs, sheep, goats, fowls of Spanish breed that these creatures might multiply in the country, for the province of Coatzacoalcos was particularly adapted for such husbandry.

In order that these two officers and their soldiers might set out fully equipped, Cortes ordered all prisoners except Narvaez and Salvatierra freed and their arms returned to them. Now, after our victory some of our soldiers had taken possession of many horses, swords and other things, and no one of us felt inclined to give back what he had got. Our captain's order caused a good deal of angry discussion and discontent, we soldiers maintaining that we held very rightfully what we had taken, for Narvaez had declared war against us, to capture us and rob us of our property, and had branded us, faithful servants of his majesty, as traitors. Therefore the loot we had got belonged to us. Still, Cortes was determined that we should give up what we had captured, and as we had elected him captain general, we could do no less than obey him. I surrendered a horse I had taken saddled and bridled, and two swords and three daggers.

Alonzo de Avila, an officer who dared speak out boldly to Cortes, and also Padre de Olmedo, privately reproached our captain for this action of his and told him that he seemed to be imitating Alexander of Macedon, who, when he had made some great gain, rewarded and honored those conquered rather than the soldiers and officers who had won him the victory. And there were other reasons for their making this remark, for every day we stayed there after the vanquishing of Narvaez, the Indians brought gold and food to him, and all the presents he gave to the conquered officers and left us unnoticed. This, they maintained, was base ingratitude after we had raised him to the post he held.

Cortes was never wanting for an answer, however, and he said that all he possessed was ours, but for the time being he could not do other than gain the good will of the followers of Narvaez with fair words and gifts, for they were many in comparison with ourselves and if they were once to rise up in anger, they might put us all to the sword.

A very great misfortune now came to New Spain. Narvaez had with him a negro servant who was ill of small pox. From this man the terrible disease spread through the whole country. Never before, the Indians said, had they had such a sickness, and in their ignorance of what to do they bathed very often in cold water, as was their custom. Great numbers of them died. The lot of Narvaez was black; but blacker still the death of so many who had not become Christians.

CHAPTER XVI

How rebellion against Alvarado broke out, and we marched back and re-entered the great city; how Cortes felt and what he said, and how the Mexicans warred fiercely against us several days; and how the mighty Montezuma died.

How quickly the wheel of fortune turns and trouble and sorrow follow joy! Such a moment now came to us. First two Tlaxcalans bearing a letter from Alvarado, and then two other messengers, told that Mexico had risen in arms, that the people were besieging the Spaniards we had left behind to guard Montezuma, that they had set fire to the new fortifications and killed seven of our men and wounded many others. God knows how greatly this news shocked us. We determined, leaving Narvaez and Salvatierra in custody at Vera Cruz, to hasten to Mexico by forced marches.

Just as we were starting four chieftains came up, sent by Montezuma to bear his complaint. They, with tears in their eyes, told that Alvarado and his soldiers had sallied from their quarters and had fallen on their caciques who were dancing and feasting in honor of their gods Huitzilopochtli and

Tezcatlipoca (Alvarado himself having given them leave to celebrate the festival) and had killed and wounded many, while the Mexicans, forced to a defence, had slain some of our Spaniards. Cortes heard this with a dark frown settling on his brow. He answered that he would go to Mexico and put things to rights. At the same time he wrote Alvarado that while we were coming by forced marches, he should see that Montezuma did not escape.

News that Mexico was in rebellion led us to abandon our plans for forming settlements in the provinces of Panuco and Coatzacoalcos, and Cortes begging the followers of Narvaez to forget the old enmity and join us in the campaign and service to God and our king, promised that those who had come to the country for a livelihood he would lead to wealth and honors. He said so many fine things that one and all agreed to go.

With all expedition we reached Tlaxcala, where we learned that the Mexicans had not ceased their attacks upon our garrison till they heard of our victory over Narvaez; and that they still failed to supply our men with food and water. Cortes now reviewed our troops and found over thirteen hundred men, eighty crossbowmen, a like number of musketeers, and ninety-six horses. In addition the caciques of Tlaxcala furnished us two thousand warriors. The same brisk steps with which we had marched to Tlaxcala we continued to the great city Texcoco. Here we began to discover the ill feeling the people had against us, for they showed us not the smallest honor and not a single cacique appeared.

On midsummer day, St John's day, in the month of June, 1520, we for the second time entered the city of Mexico. None of our Mexican friends met us on the streets, and all the houses were empty. Not until we reached our quarters did Montezuma come to welcome Cortes and congratulate him on his victory over Narvaez. Our captain, however, flushed with newly acquired power, refused to listen to the monarch, who returned sad and depressed to his apartments.

We soldiers again took our lodgings in the old quarters, and Narvaez' men found similar comforts. We then saw and talked with Alvarado and the soldiers who had stayed with him, and heard many conflicting reports of the revolt. Some of the soldiers said that Montezuma had quieted the people and put down the insurrection, and if he had had secret understanding with his people, our men would have been killed. Alvarado, for his part, told Cortes that the Mexicans had risen in arms because their god, Huitzilopochtli, commanded it in revenge for our having set up a cross and the image of Our Lady in his temple. Further, they had risen because of the message Narvaez sent Montezuma, that he was coming to release the monarch from prison and lead us away in chains; and because Montezuma found that although we now had ships, we were not leaving the country and he believed what we said about embarking empty words; and since more teules were arriving we never intended to leave. Therefore the Mexicans had determined, before we should come back to Mexico with the soldiers we had conquered, to put all who were there to the sword and liberate their monarch. Cortes became very angry when Alvarado gave these and other reports about the uprising, and he told Alvarado his work had been ill done and hurtful to the Spanish cause and he wished to hear no more of it.

When Cortes on our return march saw how the people of Texcoco had not stirred a foot to give him a reception and had only afforded him food, and bad food at that, and with ill will, and when he met the same, or stronger, expression of ill feeling in entering Mexico, and, although he returned with additional forces, the people no longer brought him supplies, the pride he had showed to the officers on the march to Mexico, glorifying himself and telling of the power he enjoyed and how the Indians would come from all parts and receive him with splendor and give him gold — this expectation of his meeting the very opposite of what it had pleased him to believe would happen, his pride turned to moroseness and anger. So it came about that when Montezuma sent two caciques to say he wished to see and talk with our captain, Cortes said, " Go to, for a hound, who will not keep an open market nor permit food to be given us! " When Leon and other chief officers heard this, they cried, " Moderate your anger, captain, recall the kindness and honor this monarch has shown us. But for him, the Mexicans would long ago have feasted on our bodies." At this seeming reproof, Cortes became still more angry and burst out with, " Why should I stand on further ceremony with this hound who secretly united with Narvaez and now refuses us food? " " To our minds," answered the officers, " he acts prudently and does nothing but what the situation prompts."

Cortes, however, relied on the strength of his troops, and he spoke angrily again to the chieftains, telling them to say to their master that he must at once order the market reopened. The caciques had understood the speech reviling their master, and also our officers' reproof. They went back and told the monarch what they had heard. Scarcely a quarter of an hour later one of our men came in badly wounded. He had been to Tacuba, a town close by Mexico, to fetch some Indian women belonging to Cortes' household, and he told how he found the city and the roads filled with warriors, and, if he had not let his charges go, they would have seized him. thrown him into a canoe and carried him off for sacrifice. Our captain and those of us soldiers used to Indian fighting were very depressed when we heard this, for we well knew with what vast crowds they always enter battle, and that we should have to run greatest risk of losing life in hunger, or in fighting in a strongly fortified city.

Cortes promptly ordered Ordas with four hundred soldiers, mostly crossbowmen and musketeers with a few horsemen, to see what truth there was in the soldier's tale, and if they could settle the trouble without fighting, to do so. Ordas had hardly reached the middle of the street when squadrons of Mexicans on the level, and many more on housetops, attacked his little troop so furiously that they killed eight of his men at first onset and wounded many.

If the body of warriors falling on Ordas was vast, the many at the same time attacking our quarters and assailing us with lances, arrows and slings was greater, and they at once wounded more than forty of our men. True, our cannon, muskets, crossbows and lances made havoc in their ranks, yet they fought with the more fury and closed their lines the more firmly, nor could we push them back one inch. It was only after a good deal of fighting that Ordas and his men were able step by step to force a passage to our quarters, his company less by fourteen soldiers than when he left, and all the rest badly wounded.

The damage the Mexicans now did, however, was nothing to what we afterwards suffered. Their audacity went so far that they entered our quarters and set them on fire, one body attacking us in front and another in the rear, and we should have been suffocated with smoke if we had not put out the fire by throwing earth over it. They hurled at random lances, stones and arrows so that the ground in all our courts was literally covered. Combat under these conditions lasted all day and until late at night, when at last we could dress our wounds, mend breaches in the wall and get ready for the next day.

At the beginning of dawn our captain decided to sally out with all of us and the troops of Narvaez, and beat the enemy, or at least make them feel our strength. The Mexicans had determined on the same action. They came in overwhelming numbers, fresh men every minute to the attack. Neither cannon nor musketry were to the purpose, nor killing from forty to fifty of their troop at a time. They fought on in close ranks, their courage seeming to increase with every loss. At times they would retreat, but that was merely a ruse to draw us from our quarters to where they could surround us, desperately assault us with stones and lances cast from housetops, and assail our ears with drums, trumpets and yells that we were scoundrels and cowards. I do not know how I so coolly tell what passed. Three or four of us who had served in Italy swore over and over again that neither against the artillery of the French, nor against the Turk himself, had they ever seen such furious fighting.

On that day they killed ten or twelve more of our men and none of us escaped without a wound. During the night we resolved that in two days' time as many of us as should be able should sally out with moving towers. These engines, of wood strongly put together, we so built that five and twenty men could move along under each of them. They had loopholes through which heavy guns could be fired, and with them, too, were musketeers and crossbowmen, and horsemen who were to charge at full gallop.

Our enemies, however, not only attacked our quarters in ten and twelve, but in twenty different points at once, so that what with building our towers, repairing breaches in the wall and beating off assailants who fixed ladders to our walls, we had enough to do. No one of us should survive that day, they shouted, but all of us should be sacrificed —our hearts torn from our bodies, our blood drawn from our veins and offered to their gods, our arms and legs eaten at their feasts, and the rest of our bodies thrown to the caged tigers, lions and snakes which they had not lately fed that they might the more greedily devour us. As for our comrade Tlaxcalans, they said they would put them in cages to fatten and use them day by day in sacrifice. But "Deliver up Montezuma!" they yelled, while their whistles and missiles assailed us the whole night.

As soon as day had fairly broken, commending ourselves to God we sallied forth with our towers. If our enemy had fought desperately on the two previous days, they stood even more firm this time. Nevertheless we determined, although at the cost of all our lives, we must push to the great temple of Huitzilopochtli. I will not detail the terrible struggle we had, how they hurled darts, stones and arrows, how, if hotly pursued, they jumped into the canals, how they wounded our horses, which lost their foothold on the smooth pavement of the courtyard. Their numbers was so vast we could not beat them back, though our cannon mowed down ten or fifteen at a time. At last we had worked our way to the foot of the temple, when, all of a sudden above four thousand Mexicans rushed up the steps for its defense. Other troops armed with long lances, stones and darts were already on the top.

We now began to make our way up the stairs. Oh! what a perilous fight it was! — we streaming with blood and covered with wounds, our men falling dead at our feet! Cortes showed astonishing valor, although that was never wanting in him. At last it pleased providence to help us to the place where we had set the image of Our Lady. It was not there. Montezuma through devotion, or fear, as we came to know, had put it in safety. But some of us set fire to the Mexican idols and their chapel, while others were fighting, for here stood together the papas and many of the caciques.

We had undergone greatest peril. Our towers were broken in pieces. All of us were covered with wounds, and forty-six of our men slain. We started to return. Our retreat was no less difficult. Oh! how they fell upon us and rushed us down the steps of the temple! And we came back to quarters just in time, for the enemy had made breaches in our walls and forced their way to our rooms. Such work we were able to stop, but never their hurling of lances, stones and arrows with most frightful yells.

When we had mended our walls, aided our wounded and buried our dead, every plan offered in our council of war had no sufficient remedy. Our troubles increased through the ill disposition of the soldiers of Narvaez who, seeming crazy and deaf to every thing said to them, cursed Cortes and even Diego Velasquez for sending them from the peace and security of their farms in Cuba to the horrors of death in this country. Finally we agreed to sue for peace so that we might leave Mexico. But dawn had barely come when fresh squadrons of Mexicans attacked our quarters again with stubborn and excessive fury. Our cannon and firearms availed nothing.

At this moment of danger Cortes determined that the great Montezuma should speak to the mob from the roof and tell them they must stay their attacks and that we wished to leave the city. When they gave him this message the monarch is said from deep grief to have cried out, " What more does Malinche want of me! — of me, tired of life, to such misery has he brought me! I will neither see nor hear more of this man. I put no faith in his lies." And he refused to do as Cortes wished. Then the Padre de Olmedo and Olid spoke in reverence and affection and persuaded him to change his mind. " Alas! " answered the monarch, " it is now too late. I believe I can gain nothing towards ending the war, for they have raised up another cacique and are determined you shall die. I think that all of you will meet death here."

In the end, however, Montezuma under guard of our soldiers went to a battlement of the roof. Many of the chieftains recognized him and ordered their men to be silent and hurl no missiles. Montezuma then began addressing the people, and in most affectionate manner told them to cease warring. Four of the chiefs advanced to a spot where they could talk with him, and with tears in their eyes they said, " Alas! great cacique, your own misfortune, and that of your children, afflict us sorely. We must tell you we have raised one of your kinsmen to be our ruler, and we are forced to carry on the war because we have vowed to our gods not to stop till every teul is killed. To Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca we pray daily to deliver you safe from our enemy's power, when we shall hold you in greater veneration than before; and we beg you to forgive us now."

They had hardly done this speech when a shower of arrows and darts fell near the monarch. Our men who had stood by to cover him with shields had, while he was speaking, withdrawn their cover. Three stones struck the great Montezuma, one on the head, another on the arm and another on the leg. We carried the unhappy monarch to his apartment, and begged him to have the wounds bandaged, and to take food to strengthen him. But he refused everything. In a little time they came to say he was dead. Cortes wept for him, and no man among us who had come to know him in close relations who did not bemoan him as though he were a father, he was so good.

Cortes now ordered a papa and a cacique among our prisoners to go to the monarch the Mexicans had chosen and say that the great Montezuma was dead, and to tell how he came to die by wounds his own people had given, and how grieved we Spaniards were. They were to tell, moreover, that they should bury him for the great king he was, and should in his royal seat set his cousin who was staying with us, or one of his sons, and then make treaty of peace with us so that we might quit Mexico. If they did not do this, we, who had held ourselves from destroying the city in our respect and love for Montezuma, would make a war that would burn their houses and do no end of damage.

Upon this we gave the body of Montezuma to six caciques and the papas whom we held prisoners, and they bore it on their shoulders and delivered it to the chieftains, telling how they had seen the great monarch die. When the Mexicans saw him dead they broke into floods of tears and shrieked and moaned bitterly. But they never let up the fierce assault they made on us, rather they came at us with renewed fury, shouting, "We will make you pay for the death of our monarch and your insults to our gods! You beg peace? Come out here and we will show you how we will make it." They said much else that I can not remember and so do not report, but it was to the effect that they would elect * a mon-

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* This goes to show the institutions of the Mexicans were in foundation democratic—"the chiefs and leaders," wrote the distinguished archæologist, Adolph F. A. Bandelier, "filled elective and in no case hereditary positions."

arch not so good-natured as Montezuma. " Don't trouble yourselves about the burial. Think of your own, for in a couple of days there will not be one of you alive."

CHAPTER XVII

How we retreated from Mexico; our night of sorrows; the days following the sorrowful night; our punitive expeditions, and how various towns begged Cortes to stop Mexican violence; why we laughed at Olid's expedition and how arrival of ships increased our forces.

WITH direst threats and yells sounding in our ears, our food and water beginning to fail, our powder fast diminishing, the bridges on the causeways raised — in short with death staring us in the face, we agreed in our council of war to leave the city at night when the Mexicans were most off their guard. To mislead them as to our time, we sent, that very afternoon, one of our prisoners, a papa, to say that they should let us in peace march out of the city within eight days.

First and most important of preparations for our retreat was a movable bridge of strong beams that we could carry and use where the former bridges had been broken. Four hundred Tlaxcalans and one hundred and fifty of our men were to have charge of this bridge and fix it in position when the need came. Two hundred and fifty Tlaxcalans and fifty of our men were told off for the heavy guns. Sandoval and one hundred of our most active soldiers were to form a vanguard and clear the streets. Cortes should go in the middle and support the part most needing help. In the rear were to go the main body of cavalry, the baggage, our prisoners, and Donna Marina, all guarded by three hundred Tlaxcalans and thirty Spaniards.

Night was fast approaching, when our captain told his steward to see that his domestics brought the gold, silver and jewels together in the hall. Then Cortes named two officers to take charge of our king's portion and load as heavily as possible eight of the wounded horses and eighty Tlaxcalans with it. For the most part it was in broad bars of gold. To his secretary and the king's notaries Cortes further said, " Put down in writing for witness that I have done all I could to save this treasure of over seven hundred thousand dollars in gold. You see the Indian porters and the horses can carry no more. I now permit any soldier to take what he can carry, otherwise it may fall into the hands of these dogs of Mexicans."

As soon as they heard this, the soldiers of Narvaez and many of our men stowed away as much of the metal as they could. I have never had the failing of coveting gold, but I took four chalchihuite stones out of a small box and quickly put them under my cuirass. It was a deed well done, for later on they served to buy me food and get help to cure my wounds.

That night a thin mist hung over the town and a gentle rain was falling, when, before midnight, we fixed the bridge in a gap the Mexicans had made and Cortes and the soldiers with him, and also many horsemen, passed over. Just then the yells, trumpets and whistles of the Mexicans suddenly burst forth calling to the people, "Up! Up! Out with your canoes for the teules are leaving!" Straightway so vast bodies of the enemy bore down upon us, and the lake at once became so crowded with canoes, that we were unable to move further.

We now had a most obstinate conflict to get possession of the bridge, and, as mischances never come singly, two of the horses slipped on the wet planks and fell into the lake. When I and others saw this we got to the other side of the bridge, and so many warriors charged us that though we fought desperately, the bridge turned by overbalance. Still, those in the rear kept continually pushing forward, and soon the opening was filled with dead horses, Indian men and women servants, baggage and many of our men, some of whom were drowned and others drawn into canoes by Indians as prisoners. The scene was heartrending. And to hear the pitiful cries! "Help! Help! I am sinking!" cried one here. "Help! they are killing me!" screamed another there. Here one reached the water-edge and implored us to lift him out, while further off another clambered over dead bodies only to meet dense crowds of the foe. Could any one believe a man of us observed the order of retreat? He were a fool.

Cortes with some of the officers and soldiers had passed, as I said, and had spurred along the causeway to reach the main land. If we had waited, horseman and soldiers, one for another, what would it have availed? Groups of thirty or forty would have been cut to pieces; not one of us would have been left alive, for on one side the causeway was the lake swarming with canoes to carry us off prisoners, and on the other hosts of warriors on the flat house-roofs pelting us with lances and stones and cutting us with our own swords — which the enemy had taken and fixed to their lances. Our muskets and crossbows were useless because of the rain, and the darkness made every movement uncertain. We should have fared even worse had it been day. By the grace of God only did we escape.

So we drove ahead to get to the town of Tacuba, where our vanguard had arrived. Finally we heard voices saying to Cortes, " Captain, we are safe here, but they say we are fleeing and leaving men behind to die. Let us go back and bring them help." Cortes answered that it was a miracle that one of us escaped, and he promptly turned back with some of our officers and soldiers who were unhurt. They did not go far. Alvarado, on foot, for he had lost his brown mare, and with him a few soldiers and Tlaxcalans, all dripping with blood, met them. The eyes of Cortes were wet with tears when he saw their woeful plight and learned that Leon and many other gentlemen lay dead, and that these few men had crossed the opening in the causeway upon dead bodies of men and the horses and the boxes with which it was choked.

Now that we, or the remnant of us, were at Tacuba we were not escaping attack, and we sought to quit the terrible neighborhood. Although the Mexicans continually harassed us with arrows, darts and slings, we marched by a bye-road, of which our Tlaxcalan friends knew, to a temple built like a fort. Here we halted and lighted fires and eased our sore bodies. Grievous it was to see our aching wounds, swollen by the cold, as we bound them with cloths. But what was more grievous was the loss of our brave companions. I do not name them. It would take long, so great was the number missing. Most of the men of Narvaez met death at the bridge because of the weight of gold which they had taken when Cortes offered the treasure.

Only twenty three horses escaped. We had not a grain of powder and our cannon were lost. We at once might make arrows, but our crossbows were few. More pressing than all, however, was the question, what would be the disposition of our Indian friends towards us? We determined to go forward with Tlaxcalans in advance as guides, our severely wounded in the centre and those too lame to walk bound upon horses unfit for fighting. But our enemy, the Mexicans, were day and night close at our heels, yelling and shouting at us and hurling stones, arrows and darts.

On we marched through plantations and hamlets, the Mexicans always in pursuit and striving to lock us in some narrow place and slay us. One night we quartered ourselves in some houses and supped off a horse they had killed. The next morning as we advanced, our scouts brought word that countless Mexican warriors filled the fields ahead. Here, however, our courage did not flag, and when our horsemen dashed over the level ground in full gallop on the enemy, our foot soldiers seemed to put double strength and spirit in their sword thrusts. It was a terrific battle. And to see Cortes! and Alvarado, who had borrowed a horse! And to hear the valiant Sandoval, all covered with wounds, encourage us, "Now, gentlemen, this is the day for victory. Our trust is in God. We shall not lose." The battle was hot. The Mexican chief fell and his warriors gave way and fled. But at this moment, indeed, we felt neither hunger, nor thirst, nor the pain of wounds, nor memory of disaster, as we followed up our victory, pursuing, wounding, killing. Our Tlaxcalan friends proved themselves very lions. Our horsemen at last returned from pursuit, and we gave thanks to God for our escape from so powerful an enemy, for never before in the Indies had the Spaniards fought so great a number of warriors, the very flower of the joint armies of Mexico and its allies. That day we supped off gourds, marching as we ate, and at the approach of evening came to a temple where we fortified ourselves, dressed our wounds, and the hurts of our horses, and got some rest.

And now we were soon to be as delighted as though we saw our native land, for we were to come in sight of the hills of Tlaxcala. Yet who could tell how the people there would feel towards us to-day? And, too, what had happened to those of us at Vera Cruz? Were they still alive? Of our great numbers only four hundred and forty survived, with twenty horses and twelve crossbowmen and seven musketeers. Each of us was weak and covered with wounds. Very clearly, said Cortes, we could see how it had pleased God to save us in a miraculous rescue, and we should give thanks. But our troops were now the same in number as when we first entered Mexico, and it behooved us to offer the Tlaxcalans no cause for offence, and trust to find them faithful and true. If it should turn out that they were not, then we must carry still further our strong arm and oak heart.

When we reached the boundary walls between the Tlaxcalan and Mexican lands, we halted to wash ourselves at a spring on a hillside and to eat. Refreshed in measure, we again set out and under the escort of many caciques and people who met us at a smaller town, we finally entered Tlaxcala, patiently to await the cure of our wounds. In that town we rested twenty-two days. Then Cortes determined on making punitive excursions into the province of Tepeaca, where the people had slain several of our soldiers on their way to Mexico.

It had become clear that the soldiers of Narvaez were not used to fighting. Those who survived the carnage at the bridge of sorrows and the great battle we fought in the fields, cursed Cortes and his conquest, and could hardly await their return to Cuba. Then, too, they cursed the gold he had given them and which they had for the most part lost. Content to have escaped with their lives, they wanted no more fighting, but rather to go back to their homes. Our captain, thinking he could bend them to his purpose, answered in quiet, kindly talk. But when they saw their complaints had no effect on Cortes, they went before a notary and drew up a formal protest demanding that he abandon war and go at once to Vera

Cruz, giving reasons that we had neither horses, muskets, powder, crossbows nor thread to make bow strings — in short, that we had none of the necessities of war and out of our company only four hundred and forty men survived. Moreover, they protested, Mexican warriors held every pass and stronghold, and if we longer delayed ship-worms would eat our vessels as they lay in the harbor.

This protest our captain answered by far more weighty contradictions, and when we of his old troop begged him most earnestly not to permit followers of Narvaez to go, for it would hurt the cause of God and the interests of our emperor, and when they saw their efforts were fruitless, they finally consented to join us in the campaign, provided Cortes would permit them, when opportunity came, to return to Cuba. Still, their murmurs did not end, but day by day they complained — how dearly they had paid for Cortes' conquest in giving up the peace and security of comfortable homes.

Our captain had wished the caciques of Tlaxcala to furnish him with five thousand warriors on his march to Tepeaca and its towns, some twenty-eight miles away, against which we aimed to carry our arms. If our wish to take vengeance for the death of Spaniards was great, that of the caciques of Tlaxcala, because of the robbing of farms, was greater, and they sent four thousand warriors to join us who numbered now seventeen horses, six crossbowmen and four hundred and twenty soldiers. We took merely a single day's food, for the country we were invading was thickly peopled and supplied with maize, fowls and dogs. Keeping a few scouts in advance, we camped for the first night about twelve miles from Tepeaca.

The people there were quite prepared for our coming, for they knew we had found a kindly shelter at Tlaxcala, and they took it for granted that as soon as we felt our strength restored we would overrun their territories. Mexican troops therefore kept guard all along the boundaries, and Tepeaca itself they strongly garrisoned. To this town Cortes, who in all such matters aimed at strict justice and order, sent some prisoners we had taken to ask who and how many were concerned in the murder of the sixteen Spaniards on their way to Mexico; why the Tepeacans had attacked and robbed the farms of the Tlaxcalans; for what reasons such vast numbers of Mexican troops bore them company; and he begged the Tepeacans to come at once and make friends with us and turn the Mexicans out, and if they did not, we should look on them as rebels, murderers and robbers, and, first desolating their country with fire and sword, give them into slavery.

The prisoners faithfully carried our message. If we, however, had sent a threatening summons, the answer the enemy sent back was still fiercer, for, puffed up with their late victory, the Mexicans spoke with terrible assurance, and finally after our repeated offers of peace, declared that we should not advance further; if we did advance, they would fall on us and have a bigger feast from Spanish flesh than they had had after the night of sorrows and the battle of the fields.

We now had a council of war in which it was agreed and taken down in writing by a notary, that all the allies of Mexico who had killed Spaniards should be turned into slaves, on the ground that after swearing allegiance to our king, they had rebelled and slain more than eight hundred of our people and over fifty of our horses. This decision Cortes sent to our enemy and again asked for peace. They replied that if we did not at once quit the province they would come out and kill us. Next day we met the vaunters in a severe battle. A ground of maize and maguey plantations proved favorable to our horsemen and the enemy's bravely availed them little. To see the spirit of our Tlaxcalan allies! — how valiant they were! — and how they pursued the enemy! When the Tepeacans became convinced that the Mexicans were no protection, they sent messengers suing for peace and they then took the oath of allegiance to our king.

Because it was on the road to Vera Cruz, and because the town was one among many and the land about it produced plenty of maize, and we had allies, the Tlaxcalans, to guard the frontier, we founded a town at Tepeaca and set up a regular government. We scoured the neighboring territory, and at one town where fifteen Spaniards had been killed, we turned many into slaves. We cast an iron to brand those we took for slaves, and its mark was the letter G, which means guerra, war. Within forty days we had all the towns punished and thoroughly at peace.

The successor of Montezuma, he who had driven us out of Mexico, about this time died of smallpox. Another now came to the headship, a near relative of Montezuma, about twenty-five years old, for an Indian very well-bred and more inclined to white than to the copper-brown of his race. The new monarch was valiant, moreover, and soon made himself so feared among his people that, in his presence, they trembled. His wife, one of Montezuma's daughters, passed for a beauty among her countrywomen.

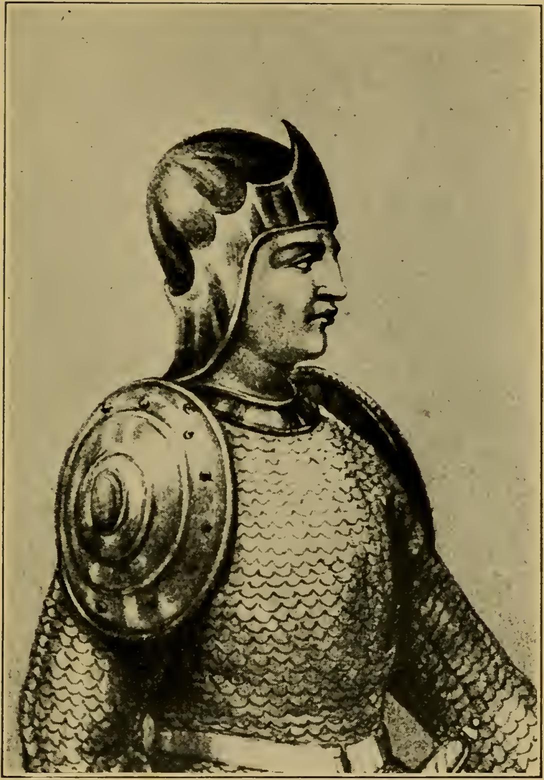
When this new ruler learned that we had defeated the Mexicans at Tepeaca, and that the people of the town had given their fealty to our king, he feared that we would overrun his other provinces and reduce them to our service, and he therefore sent messengers to every town with commands that they be ready for action. To some of the town caciques he sent presents of gold, and others he freed from tribute. But above all he sent out companies of warriors with the command that they fight us fiercely and prevent us from entering his territory.

This new monarch, Guatemoc, had thrown especially strong garrisons, as I said, into towns that lay on the boundaries, in particular into Guacachula and Izucar. In these cities, about twelve miles from each other, his Mexican warriors were such a host, and they so felt their strength, that they took liberties and went so far as to do acts of violence — as robbing people of their mantles, their maize, their fowls, their gold, and even of their daughters and wives, if the women were pretty. So when the Guacachulans considered how the town of Cholula had enjoyed peace ever since the day it had rid itself of Mexican garrisons, and how again it was the same at Tepeaca and other towns, they secretly despatched four chieftains to Cortes and asked him to send his teules with their horses to stop the robberies and assaults; and they added that all the people of the town and neighborhood would aid us in slaying the Mexicans.

This call for aid appealed to Cortes and he determined to send out Cristobal de Olid in command of nearly all the horsemen and soldiers and a large force of Tlaxcalans — for the booty the Tlaxcalans had carried off from Tepeaca had induced many more to join us. Now among Olid's three hundred soldiers were several followers of Narvaez, and as they went on their way some Indians told these Narvaez men that all the fields and houses in the country to which they were marching were filled with Mexican warriors — this and other hugger-mugger stories.

These men of Narvaez had from the beginning no liking for this new expedition, or again to taste fighting; rather they bent all their thoughts on getting back to Cuba. Their memories of the perilous flight from Mexico, and of their terrific battle in the fields, urged them so that they begged Olid to turn back, for this expedition would fail and every man of them perish. In vain the leader expostulated, Cortes' own soldiers standing behind all he said and agreeing there must be no retreat. The others refused to advance another step; and at last they so confused the mind of Olid that he turned back, and wrote Cortes the state of things.

The letter greatly angered Cortes and he sent two crossbowmen with a letter marvelling that an officer of Olid's strength and courage should fail to do what he had been ordered. When Olid read what Cortes had written, he shouted with chagrin, and bitterly reproached those who had led him into disobedience of commands. At once he issued orders for all to



Cristobal de Olid, a very valiant man

come with him, and if there were any who did not want to join, they were to go back to headquarters and receive the reward of cowards and deserters.

The vexation of the whole matter turned Olid into a fierce lion, and shortly after, when he met the enemy in the field, he led his men to a triumphant victory. The Mexican garrisons retreated and fortified themselves in another large town where there was another great body of warriors posted in a fort. To this place again Olid, and those who would follow him, marched and fell so furiously upon their foes that they routed them completely.

When this force of Olid's returned from the expedition, Cortes and the rest of us went out to meet them; and we had much laughter about the discontented having persuaded Cristobal de Olid to turn back. And Olid even laughed at it himself and said that some of his soldiers had thought more of their mines in Cuba than of their soldiers' arms; and he vowed that never again would he go on an expedition with any of the rich followers of Narvaez, but would take with him only a few of the poor soldiers of Cortes. In these days Sandoval also led an expedition against other towns where Spaniards had been attacked and made way with, and came back to where we lay at Tepeaca, bringing clothes, arms and two saddles which they had found in a temple offered before idols. His force also brought back great numbers of Indian women and boys who were branded with the iron as slaves.

Perfect tranquillity now reigned. Both during our expeditions, and while we were lying at Tepeaca, several ships came to port. One, fitted out in Cuba, brought letters in which Diego Velasquez, believing that Narvaez had now conquered New Spain, sent word that if Narvaez had not already killed Cortes, he should at once send him alive, with all his chief officers, to Cuba, that he, Velasquez, might ship them to Spain; — indeed, such were the orders of the bishop of Burgos, who was also archbishop of Rosano and president of the council of the Indies. When our admiral, Cavallero, had received the new comers with careful courtesy, and had got them ashore, he then said, "Surrender! in the name of our captain general, Cortes!" They were dumbfounded. But they submitted and removed sails, rudder and compass from the ship, and afterwards the captain of the ship, Barba, with thirteen soldiers and two horses, marched on to our quarters. Great was our joy at their coming, for they brought us aid at the very minute we needed it. Only eight days after Cavallero captured another ship, and in the same manner, that is, by welcoming the new arrivals and not letting them know that Narvaez had failed till they were landed and in his power; and all the forces on board, eight soldiers, a mare, six crossbows and twine for bowstrings, he forwarded. Our pleasure at the coming of the new guests was greater even than at those of a few days before, and Cortes paid them much honor and gave each man something to do.

We thanked God most heartily for this strengthening of our forces with soldiers, crossbows and horses. But still more aid arrived; for ships which Francisco de Garay had sent to form a settlement on the river Panuco came to harbor, the first bearing sixty soldiers. They had fortunately escaped, re-embarked and come to our port after Indians had massacred the settlers on the Panuco and set fire to the ships. These sixty soldiers were all of them ill and got to our camp very slowly, for they had been so weakened by hunger they could scarcely walk. When Cortes saw them so swollen in body he knew they were no material for fighting men, and that we should hardly be able to cure them, but he gave them to our care and did them every possible kindness. Many of them died.

The next ship to come to our port had also been sent by Garay to succor his Panuco colony, but when the captain ran up the Panuco and found no trace of the settlers, and also learned from Indians that they had been slain, he hoisted sail and made for Vera

Cruz. There he at once disembarked his soldiers, who numbered more than fifty, with seven horses, and started for the place where we were stationed.

Again a few days after another ship arrived at our port, likewise despatched by Garay to protect and succor his Panuco forces, which he thought safe and well. This ship brought over forty men, ten horses, crossbows and other arms. Thus it was that Francisco de Garay sent off one ship after another to the aid of his colony and each served him in no way and only went to increase the advantages of Cortes and ourselves, for they finally arrived at Vera Cruz and brought us most welcome help. The men from the last of these two ships were so hearty and fat when they came in that we called them "strong-backs," and those from the third, "pack-saddles," because they wore heavy cotton cuirasses, so thick that no arrow could penetrate them.

CHAPTER XVIII

How Cortes used the ships, and ordered Martin Lopez to model thirteen sloops for the lake of Mexico; what happened as our army marched to Texcoco and Sandoval went to fetch timber of the sloops; of the great thirst we endured, our march about the lake, and the plot to stab Cortes.

WHEN the officers of Narvaez saw that the towns of the province of Tepeaca were at peace, they begged Cortes to do as he had promised and give them leave to go back to the island of Cuba. Their request Cortes was not slow in granting, and he even sent them off supplied with such food as we at that time had, maize, salted dog's flesh and a few fowls, and promised that, although many of them went away rich, if he wholly conquered New Spain, he would give them more gold. We who remained behind asked Cortes why he gave them leave to go, for we were so few. He answered that he wanted to be done with their importunities and complaints; it was better to be alone than in bad company, and we could see for ourselves that many of them were not fit for service. Alvarado had orders to see them to port and aboard one of the best ships, and then to return to headquarters.

In another ship Cortes despatched Alonzo de Mendoza and Diego de Ordas to Spain for some purpose he did not tell, and afterwards we only heard that when the bishop of Burgos told Ordas to his face that we were a parcel of villains and traitors, Ordas stood up stoutly for us. In a third ship Cortes sent Alonzo de Avila to Santo Domingo to give to the governors of the islands account of what we had done — Cortes choosing Avila to get him out of the way, for he spoke his mind very freely and sided with us soldiers in every difficulty, as I have already told on page 235, if he thought us unjustly dealt with.

Here the reader may ask how without money could Cortes send Ordas to Spain, for in Spain, as elsewhere, money is a necessity. And how could he send still another ship to buy horses in Jamaica? I can only say that when we were fleeing from Mexico on the night of our great sorrow, much gold, as I have told, was left in a heap, and many of the soldiers, especially the horsemen and followers of Narvaez, stowed away treasures from the heap. Then, besides, many of the eighty Tlaxcalans who were laden with gold were in the vanguard and got safely over the bridges. It is clear that not all the gold was lost on the causeway, but many loads saved. We poor soldiers who had no command, but only lived to obey, and on that night were trying to save our lives, cared little whether we had gold or not, and were happy to get off with any degree of safety and cure our wounds. Of the gold that was saved Cortes and some of the officers got as much as they could lay their hands on.

In the peace now prevailing Cortes moved the main part of the troops to Tlaxcala, leaving behind at Tepeaca an officer with twenty soldiers ill or wounded. At this time also our captain ordered that enough timber should be cut to build thirteen sloops by which we might again reach Mexico, for it was certain we could not carry on war or enter by the causeways, and we could never master the waters surrounding the town without sloops. Martin Lopez, of whom I have already told as a good soldier in our fight with Narvaez, and an expert in modeling and in cutting the wood of boats — this Martin Lopez now set to work with his unfailing and clever craftsmanship. He made such speed in cutting the wood — Indians whom the caciques of Tlaxcala sent to us aiding in felling and preparing — that he soon had the whole of it cut, and each beam marked for its place in its sloop after the way master carpenters marked pieces in their building. Another good soldier, Andrez Nunez, and a skilful old carpenter, Ramirez, lame of a wound, helped. Cortes also sent Santa Cruz, a worthy soldier, to Vera Cruz for the iron work and sails and cables of the ships we destroyed; and with orders that all the blacksmiths should come to Tlaxcala to do the forging. With the help of more than a thousand Indian porters to carry the loads, Santa Cruz brought everything over the mountains, even cauldrons for boiling the pitch with which to caulk the sloops. Our Indians did not know how to extract tar, and here we were at a loss till Cortes picked four sailors who understood the work and sent them off to some pine woods to make it.

As soon as Cortes saw that the croakers with their infection of others with cowardice were off for Cuba, and that the timber was preparing for the sloops, he determined to march with all our soldiers to Texcoco, after Mexico one of the largest cities of New Spain. Whether Texcoco was the best place for putting together and launching the sloops we discussed at great length, for some of the soldiers claimed that Ayotzingo, near Chalco, had better canals, while others maintained that Texcoco was better, standing as it did near many other towns, and that when we once got it in our power we should be better able to plan our operations against Mexico.

We had scarcely settled on the town I have said when some soldier brought news from Vera Cruz that a large ship had run in from Spain and the Canaries, laden not only with crossbows and crossbow-cords, muskets, powder and other arms, but also with three horses and thirteen soldiers. Great was our delight! Cortes sent at once to bargain for all the arms and powder, in fact, for the whole cargo of the ship. If before this we were in good spirits for our start for Texcoco, now we felt the more elation on having this timely succor. All the passengers on board, and even the sailing master, came to our camp, where we gave them warmest welcome.

When our captain found himself so rich in muskets, powder, crossbows and horses, and saw how impatient we all were, officers and soldiers alike, again to attack the great city of Mexico, he asked the caciques of Tlaxcala to send ten thousand warriors to join us in our campaign. He was making them a speech about the matter when an elder cacique assured him that not only ten thousand warriors, but many more were at his service. We began our march a day or two after Christmas of the year 1520.

Our enemies, the Mexicans, had barricaded the mountain passes between Tlaxcala and Texcoco with felled trees and otherwise, but our Indian friends cleared away the trees and filled up holes so that our horsemen could pass, and when on the second day we descended from the heights and saw before us the lake of Mexico and its great cities standing in the midst of waters, we thanked God for allowing us to look upon the scene again, and vowed we would act more prudently in this campaign.

The people of Texcoco were not now on the best of terms with the Mexicans, and, moreover, smallpox was raging throughout the whole district, and in these reasons, perhaps, lay the fact that on the following day, as we neared Texcoco our scouts brought the glad tidings that ten unarmed Indians were approaching, bearing a golden banner. Upon coming to us they lowered the banner in token of peace, and when they neared Cortes, who had our two interpreters, Donna Marina and Aguilar, standing by him, they said, "Malinche, our master, the cacique of Texcoco sends us to beg you to take him into your friendship. He awaits you in the city, and as signal of peace sends you this banner, and asks you to order your brothers and the Tlaxcalans not to harm his land and in his city to be his guests."

Cortes was overjoyed at the message, and embraced the ambassadors warmly. Nevertheless, in counselling with his officers, who also were of his opinion, he could not but suspect the Indians were playing some trick — for if the Texcocans had been honestly inclined they would have not acted in so great a hurry, and would have brought food. However, he accepted the golden banner with thanks, and assured the bearers that he was not in the habit of ill-treating any vassal of our king, and if they kept the peace which they now sought, he would protect them from the Mexicans and order the Tlaxcalans to do them no injury.

Early next morning we entered Texcoco itself, and at once it struck us as singular that we saw neither women nor children, only men seemingly avoiding us, as if at war with us. After we had got to our quarters in some great halls, and Cortes had summoned the officers and most of us, he ordered Alvarado, Olid, some other soldiers and me to ascend the great temple and look over the town and lake. We had no sooner got to the top than we saw the people of towns round about moving away their belongings, some taking to the hills and others hiding in the reed-thickets of the water. All the lake was alive with canoes.

When we reported these facts Cortes determined to seize the sender of the golden banner, the cacique of Texcoco, and he despatched papas to summon their ruler. They returned, reporting that he had fled with many chieftains to Mexico. In secret understanding with the cacique of Mexico, chieftains told us next day, this runaway cacique had murdered his elder brother to raise himself to power. The rightful heir, whom the Texcocans named, Cortes, with all solemnity and without delay, installed as cacique. Greatly esteemed and beloved by his subjects, he became a convert to Christianity and rendered us a considerable service, for Cortes required of him a large force to broaden and deepen the canals through which we were to draw our sloops to the lake. Every day from seven to eight thousand of this cacique's Indians were busy at the main canal — for Cortes' purpose was to enclose Mexico on all sides — and they deepened and broadened it so that it could have floated ships of large size.

About this time several townships sent to ask forgiveness and sue for peace, if we identified them with murder of our countrymen in late wars. But others published their hostility towards us by raiding towns which wanted to be friends with us. The Tlaxcalans who were with us were anxious to gain honors in fighting the Mexicans and their allies and to avenge the death of kindred who had been sacrificed. Our own soldiers were idling at Texcoco. In consideration of these facts Cortes determined on several expeditions to neighboring towns, to punish our enemies, defend our friends and always seek still other allies. One expedition he commanded in person; another Sandoval led.

But our carpenters in Tlaxcala had now so far prepared the timber for our sloops that all was ready and waiting. Days passed. Expeditions went out and came back. Yet no sloop timber reached Texcoco. Many of our soldiers felt very anxious about the state of affairs. It was therefore after much impatience and ardent longing to begin our siege of the great city that Cortes ordered Sandoval to take two hundred soldiers, twenty musketeers and crossbowmen, fifteen horsemen, a strong body of Tlaxcalans, and to these to add twenty chieftains of Texcoco, and to fetch the woodwork. He was also to convey elders and children of Chalco to places of greater safety.

Moreover, he was to go to a town close by the road leading to Tlaxcala and punish the people for attacking a company of Spaniards who were passing through a narrow road in the mountains where they could march only one by one. Some of the Spaniards they killed in the pass; the blood of others they took prisoners still stained the idols and walls of the temple where the Indians had sprinkled it. Skins off the faces of two, tanned like skin for gloves, and the beards still on them, lay as an offering on an altar. The skins of four horses, also tanned with the hair on, hung before the main altar, alongside the horse shoes, as token of victory. Articles of Spanish dress were suspended as offerings before idols, while a pillar of one of the houses told us in letters written in charcoal, "Here the unfortunate Juan Yuste and others of his company were imprisoned." This Juan Yuste was a gentleman who had served under Narvaez.

These evidences of our brothers' suffering and cutting off of life greatly grieved Sandoval and his men. Yet what better could they do than show mercy in return? Fear had fallen upon the people and they had fled to the mountains. A few chiefs and women whom Sandoval took wept for the expected fate of all. But Sandoval sent these few to bring back the people, and upon their return they begged forgiveness of the past and declared themselves faithful vassals of our king for the future.

Sandoval and his men now went on the way to Tlaxcala, and when he neared the capital, where the cacique lived, he found eight thousand Tlaxcalans carrying on their shoulders all the wood and other building material for the sloops, and as many more warriors with arms and plumes acting guard, besides two thousand porters bringing food. Caciques commanded these forces, but Martin Lopez, our great master carpenter, was in charge of the transport. When Sandoval saw the whole matter of transportation working out so efficiently he was delighted, for he had expected the work of getting the timber started would detain him days in Tlaxcala.

In the same order in which the transporting party was moving when we met them, we marched towards Texcoco. After we entered Mexican territory, that is, after two days, the enemy showed their derision by whistling and yelling hideously at us from farms and ravines and other places beyond reach of our horsemen and musketeers. Martin Lopez, who had charge, as I said, advised that we now change the order of our march, for the Tlaxcalans had told him that the Mexicans might attack and defeat those heavily laden with materials and food supplies. Therefore Sandoval divided the horsemen and crossbowmen so that some should always be in advance, and others on the flanks, and others form the rear guard with Sandoval himself. Another two days' march brought the transport in front of Texcoco, which town the Tlaxcalans entered, clad in their finest mantles and head-feathers, in military order, drums and trumpets playing, and themselves shouting, "Long live the king! Spain forever! Tlaxcala forever!"

The porters laid the woodwork and other material for the sloops near the canals, where the boats were to be put together, and the builder-in-chief, Martin Lopez, aided by Andrez Nunez, and the elder Ramirez, and a sawyer, and certain Indian carpenters, and two blacksmiths with their forges, and Hernando de Aguilar, who helped with the hammer — all together worked with such will that they put together the sloops in a very short time, and then they had merely to caulk them and set masts and rigging.

We had now to keep a sharp outlook for Mexican spies, lest they should destroy the boats as they lay on the staples near the lake; indeed, three several times they did attempt to fire them. But the Mexicans were now engaged in despatching messengers to every town subject to the great city, and commanding the people to make vigorous preparations for war. Day and night they were also busy in deepening and widening the canals beneath the bridges, and strengthening their fortifications, making long lances to throw against our horses, and getting in order darts and dart-throwers and swords and round stones.

After several expeditions to towns within a few miles of Texcoco, Cortes determined on his march against hostile cities and villages about the lake. To accomplish this, we set out in the morning of the 5th of April, 1521, the first night casting our camp at Tlamanalco, where the people received us kindly. When, next day, we reached Chalco, Cortes sent for all the caciques of the province and made them a speech, through Donna Marina and Aguilar, telling how we wanted them to assemble all their warriors the following day and go with us, for we were now going to try to induce the towns near the lake to keep peace and also to see the country before, aided by our sloops, we blockaded Mexico. Agreeing to what we asked with one voice, more than twenty thousand Indians joined us — a larger force than had up to that time ever acted with us. Hope of booty doubtless led many to join us, but the expectation of meals of human flesh, always plentiful after a battle, was no doubt an inducement. When armies march in Italy vultures, crows and other birds of prey follow to feed of the dead of the battlefield; so, for the same reason, I believe these many Indians followed us.

We now had news that large bodies of Mexicans and their allies lay ready to attack us on a plain near by. Our march was up over some steep rocks between two hills, on the tops of which hills Indians had built fortifications. From this shelter they and their wives now yelled and hooted at us. We marched quietly on our way, however, and came to a plain in which there were springs. On one side rose a high, rocky hill, and as we approached it warriors crowded its top and jeered at us and showered us with arrows and darts and stones. "It appears," said Cortes, halting before the hill, "that these Mexicans seize strongholds and mock at us because they think we can not attack them"; and he sent horsemen to find a favorable point for an onset. They came back with word that the hill rose perpendicularly and the best approach was where we then were. Our captain ordered us to ascend. As we started to climb it was terrible to see the Indians toppling over huge boulders — which came bounding and thundering down the hill's rugged sides. One soldier fell dead at my feet, without a word or groan. Still we kept on. Rolling and tearing boulders soon killed two more. Then in a few moments another brave soldier fell, crushed to death. Most of us were wounded by pieces split off the rocks by the tumbling masses. Only a miracle saved all of us from death.

I was an active young fellow in those days, and I kept on following the standard bearer, Corral, and after we got under some projecting rocks we clambered from hollow to hollow. Finally sheltering himself behind a bunch of thorn trees, his face covered with blood, his banner torn to rags, Corral called out, " Oh, Bernal Diaz, it is impossible to go further. There is place for neither hand nor foot. Keep in the shelter of the rock, and watch that none of these boulders hit you." He then shouted to the soldiers that they should pass on the word to Cortes. Even on the level, where our captain stood, the hurtling rocks had killed two or three soldiers. But from the winding of the hill Cortes had not seen that nearly all of us who started to climb were wounded or dead. He now signed by shouts and musket shots that we should retreat, and, each of us striving to help his neighbor, we finally got to the plain, our heads covered with wounds and blood, our banners rent and eight men slain.

Large bodies of Mexicans lay in wait for us further on, stationed there in case the troops on the high hill should need their assistance. Retreating before us, they took up a strong position on another rock. We now suffered terribly from lack of water. Not a single drop passed our parched lips the whole day, and our horses suffered equally. The few springs we came upon our Indian allies crowded into and turned into pools of mud. Half dead with thirst, we encamped for the night under some mulberry trees — where the enemy greeted us with a shower of arrows, lances and rocks.

Our combat with the foe on the neighboring hill next morning was short. While we were attempting to reach them they suddenly sued for peace. That we who were beneath might understand, the warriors stopped shooting arrows and hurling stones, and the women waved their cloaks and made signs with their hands to indicate that they were willing to make maize cakes for us. The fact was they had not a drop of water among their great number of men, women and children — themselves and their slaves. Upon seeing their signals, Cortes ordered that fighting should cease, and that they should send down five chiefs to conclude peace. The caciques came shortly, and with show of profound respect begged that we would forgive them. Cortes answered that they deserved death, but since they had sued for peace they must go to the other hill and call the chiefs there, who must likewise sue for peace; and if they refused we should surround them till they died of thirst. All finally came, and after they had given many reasons why they should be pardoned, Cortes granted their prayer and declared them vassals of our king.

Water we found very scarce in this whole district. But we marched on to the town of Oaxtepec, and there found a river flowing through a garden — the most splendid garden I have ever seen in its many kinds of fruit trees and roses and sweet-scented herbs, and in its medicinal plants and vegetables good to eat, and in its avenues and pleached alleys, and many houses adorned with pictures. Delighted, the whole of us encamped in this garden for a night, but the next morning we left for Cuernavaca.

Cuernavaca was a natural stronghold by reason of the ravines about it, eight fathoms deep, with small streams at the bottom. It was also heavily garrisoned. Our enemy, entrenched within the ravines, shot many arrows and lances at us, and hurled stones so that they fell without ceasing. A couple of miles further up our horsemen found that they might pass over, and we soldiers saw that we might climb along the branches of some trees that grew on either side of the ravines and met one another, and so we might get within. In making our passage on the branches three soldiers fell into the water below and one broke his leg. As I crept over my head grew quite dizzy. Still I got across, and as soon as twenty or thirty of us had reached the inner side of the gully, we fell on the rear of the Mexicans. When they saw us and at the same time sighted our oncoming horsemen, they could not believe we had crossed, and in their astonishment, fancying we numbered more than we did, they turned and fled to hollows where we could not follow. Later, when we had quartered ourselves in a comfortable garden, caciques of the town came to us and, paying great respect to Cortes, handed him a present of gold and begged his pardon for meeting us with war, in excuse saying that the great cacique of Mexico had commanded them to attack us; but now they sincerely wished to become friends, for they were sure there was no stronghold we could not take. I still recall a strange remark these caciques made; namely, that our gods had told their gods that they and their towns should be chastized.

Turning towards Xochimilco, a great city about eleven miles from Mexico, we marched in close order through a forest of pine trees without being able to find on the way a single drop of water. The sun was exceedingly hot. When Cortes saw the troop exhausted, and our allies, the Tlaxcalans, losing courage, and even two men dead of thirst, he ordered a halt under the shade of some pines, and sent horsemen ahead to search for villages or wells of water where we might camp for the night.

As the horsemen set out I slipped away with my three strong Tlaxcalan servants and followed, and about two miles ahead we came upon farms on the hillsides. To our inexpressible joy we here found wells, and my Tlaxcalans brought from one of the houses a large earthen pitcher of very cold water, with which I and my Tlaxcalans quenched our thirst. Then I had the jug refilled, and because the dwellers of the farms were beginning to hoot and yell at us, I turned back and found Cortes just putting the troops in motion. I told him we had found water, and my Tlaxcalans were bringing him a jug full, but carefully hidden that no one might seize it, for thirst knows no laws. He and other officers about him were glad and drank their fill, and we marched on to the farms. But the houses, or their wells, did not have enough water for all the men, and owing to their hunger and thirst, some of the soldiers tried to moisten their mouths by chewing thistle-like plants, the sharp prickles of which hurt their tongues.

Next morning we arrived in front of Xochimilco, built in a fresh water lake. The immense number of warriors standing ready to oppose our entrance I can not estimate. They covered the land. Many of them carried shining swords taken from us and now fastened on the end of their pikes. We met their terrific attack, and after various ill-successes, drove them out of the open square. There several of our soldiers mounted to the top of the temple and looked over towards the city of Mexico — when they saw more than two thousand canoes, filled with warriors, making towards us as fast as paddles could bring them. The great cacique was likewise sending ten thousand men against us by land.

I should weary the reader by detailing our terrible and obstinate conflicts of the next three days. I am myself tired of writing about our encounters. When Guatemoc sent his warriors by canoe and by land, he commanded that they were not to permit us to leave Xochimilco alive, and it was with the utmost exertion that we were at last able to cut our way through the Mexican hosts to a great plaza a little way from the town where they usually held their markets. Here we halted to arrange our order of march, and here Cortes told us of our perilous fortunes — how the forces of Mexico were lying in wait for us in passes of the road we were about to travel. It would be a good thing, he said, if we were to leave behind as much of our baggage as we could spare, for it would only cumber us when we had to fight. To this we one and all answered that we could not be so cowardly and, please God, we were men enough to defend our baggage, ourselves and him, too.

All along the road to Tacuba warriors never ceased making sudden attacks on us from positions where we could not well get at them; and then they would seek refuge in neighboring creeks and inlets. After we had rested a couple of hours in Tacuba, our captain with several officers and soldiers, including myself, ascended the great temple from which we had view of the city of Mexico, and of the lake and other cities standing in the water. When the men who had never been there before saw the splendor before them, they could scarcely find words, and when further they gazed more carefully upon the great city, on the multitude of canoes hurrying up and down the lake, some laden with food, others empty, others with fishermen, they marvelled still more and said our coming to New Spain was not by the power of man alone, but by the great mercy of God; and moreover, never, in any writing, had they read of vassals who had done such signal service to their king as we had rendered ours.

While Cortes and all of us stood there gazing on the wonderful city, and pointing out the lofty temple of Huitzilopochtli, the buildings where we were lodged, and the causeways and bridges along which we had retreated, Cortes sighed deeply and with great sadness. One of our number, rousing him from his contemplation, said, " Captain, do not give way to grief. It is ever so in war time." " How often have I not offered peace to that city! " answered Cortes. " But I am not grieving over that hardship only, I am thinking of what we must suffer before, with the aid of God, we master its forces." Breaking up our quarters in Tacuba, we marched on to Atzcapotzalco, which we found deserted, and then through heavy rains on to Guautitlan, and so round the lake to Texcoco; from which not only own people came to meet us, but also those lately from Spain; and, too, peoples of the neighborhood, who brought us food.

While we were away, a friend of the governor of Cuba, one Villafana, conspired with soldiers of the party of Narvaez to murder Cortes when he should return. A ship had just come in from Spain and they planned that while Cortes sat at dinner with his officers and other soldiers, one of the conspirators should hand him a letter, sealed as if it had come from Spain, and should say it was from his father, Martin Cortes; and while Cortes was reading the letter they should poniard him and all present who might resist them. In place of Cortes one of the officers was to be the new captain general, and our property, horses and all, was to be divided anew.

But it pleased the Almighty to prevent this horrible deed. One of the soldiers divulged the whole plot. Cortes, secretly informing trusted officers, visited the quarters of Villafana, and drew from the guilty man's dress a list of all uniting in the treachery. The chief conspirator then made full confession;

and regular judges having found him guilty, he was hanged before the place where he had lodged.

Cortes wished to save others dishonored by the affair, but he agreed to have a guard of trustworthy, valiant soldiers for his person night and day. He begged us, in whom he placed confidence, to watch over his safety, and although he never showed any animosity to those who were in the conspiracy, from that time forth he distrusted them.

CHAPTER XIX

How Cortes ordered the towns to furnish us arrows and arrow-heads, and, before beginning the siege of Mexico, held a muster and published articles of war; and how having divided our troops, he ordered the three divisions to invest the city and break the aqueduct of Chapultepec; how the sloops aided in our daily battles and difficulties they met.

Now that the canal by which they were to pass into the lake had been broadened, and the sloops had been built and rigged with sails and oars, and each sloop fitted with spare oars for case of need, Cortes sent to all the allied towns that lay near Texcoco, asking that the people furnish in eight days eight thousand arrow heads of copper, made after Spanish points which were given them as models, and eight thousand arrows, also of a certain sort of wood, and in form like the Spanish arrows sent as patterns. At the end of the time they brought their work to our camp — more than fifty thousand arrow-heads and as many thousand arrows — and the arrow-heads were even better than those we brought from Spain.

Cortes at once commanded Pedro Barba, leader of the crossbowmen, to divide arrows and copper points among the crossbowmen, and to see that they fixed the points neatly, and put the feathers on with a paste (which sticks better than that from Spain) made from some roots. Every crossbowmen also was to have two well-twisted cords for his bow, and also two nuts, and the whole company were to shoot at heaps of earth to see what distance the crossbows would carry. The horsemen were also to have their horses fresh shod, and to get their lances ready and to exercise their horses in such ways as galloping and turning quickly.

Cortes then sent word to the caciques of Tlaxcala that we should soon leave Texcoco and begin the siege of Mexico, and that he wanted them to send twenty thousand warriors from Tlaxcala, Cholula and other peoples. But the message was unnecessary. All knew of the meeting and the plan, and all were now our brothers in arms. From every side most friendly assurances of assistance reached us.

A muster of our troops the second week after Easter in the large square of Texcoco made our number eighty-four horsemen, six hundred and fifty foot soldiers, some with swords and shields and others with lances, and one hundred and ninety-four crossbowmen and musketeers. From these, twelve crossbowmen and musketeers were chosen to man each of the thirteen sloops. Twelve other men and a captain were to serve as rowers, six on each side of each sloop. Therefore each sloop carried twenty-five men with cannon and powder.

In choosing men to row, Cortes could not find enough sailors. He therefore asked who went out a-fishing every day, and if these fishers came from any port in Spain celebrated for its sailors, he commanded them to service of the sloops. Many who were men of noble birth protested to Cortes that he would not think of insulting them by setting them to such work. But under threat of heavy penalties he made them go and row, and in this way mustered one hundred and fifty capital oars.

Next Cortes published the articles of war:— First of all no one should dare blaspheme our Lord Jesus Christ or his blessed mother, Our Lady, or the holy apostles, or any other saint. Second:— No man was to ill-use our allies, or take anything from them, even booty; for we were to bear in mind that they joined us at our request. Third:— No soldier, day or night, should leave our camp for any purpose whatever, even to fetch food from a town. Fourth:— Every soldier must wear good armor, well quilted, a neck guard, head piece, leggings and shield, for defence from javelins, stones and darts of our enemy. Fifth:— No man should gamble for horses or arms. Lastly:— No soldier should lie down to rest unless he were fully armed and wearing sandals (unless, indeed, he were suffering from wounds or illness); that we might be prepared to receive the enemy at a moment's notice.

Then, in addition, were the usual articles of war: — Death to the sentinel who deserted his post or fell asleep on duty; and death to a soldier who went from one camp to another without leave from his officer, or who deserted his captain in battle.

Our captain now divided the whole of our troops into three divisions. The first division, Alvarado commander, was of one hundred and fifty foot, armed with swords and shields, thirty horsemen and eighteen musketeers and crossbowmen, and eight thousand Tlaxcalans; and Cortes chose me to go with Alvarado, and we were to take up our position in the town of Tacuba. To Olid our captain gave the second division of thirty horse, one hundred and seventy-five foot and twenty musketeers and crossbowmen, and likewise eight thousand Tlaxcalans, and he ordered him to pitch his camp in the town of Coyoacan, about eight miles from Tacuba. To Sandoval fell the third division of twenty-four horse, fourteen crossbowmen and musketeers, one hundred and fifty foot armed with shields and swords, and another body of eight thousand Tlaxcalans. This division was to seize a site near Iztapalapa, and attack the town and do it as much damage as possible. Cortes himself commanded the sloops.

On a Wednesday of May, 1521, we set out from Texcoco, turning to the right or north. By vespers of the fourth day we had come to Tacuba, like other towns we had passed, deserted. Here, at Tacuba, we quartered ourselves and here our Tlaxcalan friends that very afternoon went through every house in the town and brought in plenty to eat. So close is Tacuba to Mexico that we could plainly hear the Mexican warriors crowding the causeways, and the lake in their canoes, and yelling at us, derisively challenging us to come out and fight. They wished to provoke us to sally at night, when they would have the advantage.

Next morning, having commended ourselves to God, with the two divisions headed by Alvarado and Olid united, we marched about two miles and broke the pipes of the aqueduct of Chapultepec — the reader recalls that these carried water to Mexico. On this errand we fell in with many warriors, for the Mexicans understood that we were now beginning our operations against the city. We put our opponents to flight, however, and carried out our purpose of breaking the pipes. From that time on to the end of the siege no more water flowed into Mexico from Chapultepec.

As soon as we had destroyed the conduits our officers agreed to advance from Tacuba along the causeway in endeavor to gain one of the bridges.

We had scarcely reached the causeway when many canoes filled with warriors crowded forward, and such hosts on foot, also, that we were astounded at the very sight. Our crossbowmen and musketeers kept up a riddling fire on the canoes, but with little effect, for the foe sheltered themselves by boards raised alongside each boat. And those of our troops on horseback made no gain, for the Mexicans would wound their horses, and then, when the horsemen charged, they would jump into the lake. Under such conditions we fought upwards of an hour. Finally when we saw another fleet of canoes advancing to fall upon our rear, and also that our friends, the Tlaxcalans, were obstructing our passage, we determined to retreat in good order.

The very instant the Mexicans saw us turn back what distracting yells and howls and whistles they gave! And how they came on! I declare it is out of my power to describe it. In an instant the whole causeway was covered with lances, arrows and stones hurled at us — to say nothing of quantities that fell into the water. But we again reached the land, and then gave fervent thanks to God for having saved us. Eight of our men had fallen and fifty suffered wounds. Hoots and jeers still reached our ears, and that night we dressed our wounds very quietly in camp. The next morning Olid withdrew his division about six miles off, for he said it was

Alvarado's fault that we had advanced so prematurely. His pride was hurt that we had not done well in this attempt upon the causeway.

As for Sandoval — he had settled at Iztapalapa after burning many houses. He and his men were engaged with Mexican troops when they saw thick smoke rising from a hill near Iztapalapa, and answering smoke signals from other towns standing in the lake. This was the Indians' signal that Cortes had run out from Texcoco with our thirteen sloops and all the Mexican canoes should assemble against our fleet. When Cortes saw the canoes crowding towards his sloops he was greatly alarmed — and with reason, for they were more than a thousand — and he chose a position where he might watch the enemy and yet steer off the sloops in any direction he chose. He also ordered that no attack should be made till the wind freshened. The Mexicans, thinking we were fear-bound, sped their canoes against our boats. But just at that moment a stiff breeze sprang up, our rowers pulled with all their might, and our whole fleet ran in among the enemy. Numbers of the canoes were upset, many Indians killed and captured, and the rest made off at a rapid rate seeking refuge in places our boats could not reach. So it was that in our first combat on the lake Cortes gained the victory. Thanks be to God!

Our officers and soldiers now, after several unsuccessful encounters, determined that it was impossible to fight along the causeways into the city, unless the sloops covered us on each side. With the sloops keeping off canoes from which the Mexicans attacked us from the water, we would, and did have better success. We captured several bridges and entrenchments. But the Mexicans had two advantages: First, they could relieve their troops from time to time and pour in fresh men; second, they could shower stones, lances, arrows upon the sloops — I can find no word to tell the fact more clearly, their missiles fell from housetops thicker than hail. But if at times, and after much labor, we succeeded in capturing a barricade, or a bridge, the enemy would return in the night, make another opening, throw up stronger defences and dig deeper pits. These pits, at once filling with water, they would cover lightly so that in the midst of the battle next day we would get caught in them, and with canoes ready at hand they could carry us off prisoners. In another artful way they kept our sloops from coming to our aid, for they drove down stakes, hidden, for their tops came below the surface of the water, and often our boats stuck fast on the stakes and so became open to attacks from the canoes.

I have already told that our horsemen were of little use to us on the causeway. If they charged, or gave chase, some of the Mexicans would throw themselves into the water, and others, standing behind breastworks, would receive them with lances made very long by swords they had taken in the night of our great defeat. With these lances, and arrows from canoes, they would wound the horses so that the owners became unwilling to risk their valuable flesh in fruitless conflict — for a horse at that time cost from eight hundred to a thousand dollars.

Under such conditions we went on fighting from morning till night. Then, when darkness came on, we would return to camp and treat our hurts with bandages steeped in oil. If our wounded had remained in camp, none of the companies would have gone out with more than twenty men at a time. Our officers and standard bearers were most exposed and oftenest wounded, and to hold aloft our tattered colors we had need every day of a fresh bearer. The divisions under Cortes, who was with Olid, and Sandoval, fared no better than ours, and the Mexicans kept attacking us every blessed day. Well, says the reader, with all these hardships they at least had enough to eat. Yes, plenty of maize cakes, but not food refreshing for the invalided. The confounded vegetables and herbs that the Indians eat kept body and soul together, with the help of cherries, while they lasted, and prickly pears.

When we began to see that in our daily advance along the causeway, we suffered loss of men, and whatever points we forced by day the Mexicans returned to by night and captured, we agreed to take up a position in a small plaza where several idol-towers rose together, and where we should have some room for our quarters. Here we were miserably off, and had nothing to protect us from the rain. Still we could carry out our object of demolishing the buildings, from the tops of which we received most injury, and of filling in the canals with the stones and woodwork from the houses. Whenever we now took entrenchment or bridge we guarded it night and day, each company watching by turns;—the first watch, which numbered more than forty soldiers from even-time until midnight, the second from midnight till a couple of hours before daylight, and the third from that time till full daylight. On nights when we expected some sudden attack we all kept watch together.

And we had every reason to be on our guard, for Guatemoc had formed the idea of falling some day or night upon our encampment on the causeway, saying that when he had defeated us on our causeway, he could promptly master Sandoval and Cortes on the other two. It was not long before Guatemoc carried out his plan and sent great hosts to storm us at midnight, and a couple of hours after still another host, and with daylight a third, and at one time they came in silence, and at another with hideous yells. Terrible it was to see the numberless stones, javelins and arrows they let fly. But we maintained our ground and sent them back with great loss.

In this way, in spite of rain and wind and cold, up to the ankles in mud, aching from wounds, there we watched; and after heavy fighting stayed our hunger with a mess of wretched maize cakes, herbs and prickly pears — which the officers cheered us by saying was a matter of course. And notwithstanding every effort of ours, the bridges we took from our enemy they often re-took from us.

But you, the reader, ask what benefit did we get in destroying the aqueduct of Chapultepec, and then the three causeways? Very little, I confess, for the Mexicans by light canoes during the night, brought in much food and water from the towns near Mexico. To cut off these supplies we determined that two sloops should cruise by night about the lake and waylay convoys of provisions. By such means we soon found we had diminished the enemy's supplies and increased our own. But even with all our effort many canoes well laden with food and water did get into Mexico. And the Mexicans tried many stratagems to rid themselves of our troublesome sloops. One time they fitted out thirty large canoes, manned with best rowers and most valiant warriors, and concealed them among the reeds of the lake to decoy our sloops in pursuit, and then run them foul of stakes they had driven in the water.

But always, and in best possible order, in our daily conflict, we were by degrees taking temples, houses, bridges, razing everything before us, and filling in the openings in the causeways with materials of the buildings we had pulled down. At last the city stood open to our view. When the towns lying in that part of the lake which was of sweet water saw how the victories we gained were counting, and that the peoples of Chalco, Texcoco and Tlaxcala had united with us more closely — these towns apparently leagued for defence, for they all sent an embassy to Cortes to sue for peace, telling how they had opposed us because Guatemoc had ordered them and they had to obey. Their coming of their own will rejoiced Cortes uncommonly. With the flattering words he knew how to use he pardoned them, although he added that they deserved severest punishment for having aided the Mexicans.

Seeing at length the futility of our present means, and the impossibility of our filling in all the gaps in the causeway that we took day by day, and the Mexicans endeavored to reopen night by night, and that this fighting and filling in and keeping watch was all of it very hard work, Cortes determined to get the opinion of officers and soldiers in the camp where he was, that is in Olid's. And also he wrote to us in the camp of Alvarado, and to those with Sandoval. The question was whether or no it seemed good to us to fall on the city with a sudden rush and force our way to the great market place, there to pitch our three camps and from our vantage point attack our enemy in their streets — thus escaping the heavy advance and retreat every day, and not having to toil everlastingly in filling in openings and canals.

Opinions differed — as always happens in such cases. Some thought we should not enclose ourselves so completely in the heart of a hostile city, that we should fight as we were then doing — pulling down the houses as we advanced and filling in the openings. If we fortified ourselves in the market place, we thought the Mexicans would reopen the hollows we had filled up and would repossess the causeways. In the great square they would assail us day and night, and our sloops could not come to our aid because of the stakes they would drive, or had driven, in the lake. In short, if we made such a station, the enemy would then be masters of the town, the country and the waters. This opinion we took care to draw up in writing. Cortes heard our objections. Nevertheless it followed that on the next day we were ordered to push on from all three camps till we reached the great market place, and the Tlaxcalans, the Texcocans and our new allies of the towns of the lake were to aid us with their canoes.

CHAPTER XX

Why Cortes suffered defeat on the narrow causeway and many other disasters came; and of the abominable barbarities of the Mexicans in sacrificing sixty soldiers they had taken; and how Cortes again offered peace, and what the papas advised.

On a Sunday morning, the 30th of June, having commended ourselves to the protection of God, we set out from camp and advanced, forcing bridges and entrenchments. We fought very cheerfully and with victory, till Cortes captured a deep opening which the Mexicans had taken care to make narrow and cover with mud. When the enemy saw that Cortes had passed this fatal opening without filling it in, and that his soldiers and the allies with him crowded in vigorous pursuit, they, pretending to flee, lured our captain and his troops still further on. Then (for ever does the wheel of fortune turn and great prosperity change to bitter adversity) masses of Mexican warriors, some in canoes, rushed suddenly from hiding places and with incredible fierceness and most fearful yells and whistles fell on the ill-fated division. Their power was overwhelming. Cortes strove to rally his forces and cried, " Stand firm, gentlemen, stand! Do you turn your backs?" But his cries were in vain. Each sought to save his own life. Nothing remained but retreat.

On this narrow causeway the Mexicans now took sixty-six soldiers captive, killed eight horses, wounded Cortes in the leg, and after a fight in which it seemed for a time they would succeed, they, yelling and calling us cowards, finally pursued our soldiers to their very camp. There, after a little delay, they cast in three heads of our countrymen, crying that these were from men with Sandoval and Alvarado whom, with all their teules, they had put to death.

We, under Alvarado, likewise advanced along our causeway and with like confidence of victory, when many squadrons of Mexicans rushed upon us and hurled in front of us five bloody heads of Spaniards they had captured from Cortes' division. "So we shall kill you," they shouted, "just as we have killed Malinche and Sandoval and all their troops." Saying this they fell on us so furiously that crossbows and muskets availed nothing, and we began to retreat. Our friends, the Tlaxcalans, crediting the shout of triumph uttered with the hurling of the five bleeding heads, and thinking Malinche and Sandoval and all their teules had been killed, fled off the causeway in terror.

As we retreated we could hear the beating of the drum which stood near the idols Huitzilopochtli and

Tezcatlipoca on top of the great temple. The sound was most melancholy. An instrument of the devil it was indeed, for every time its doleful tones startled our ears, they were offering the hearts and blood of our comrades before their idols. Beset from housetop, canoes and causeway, we had not near accomplished our retreat when Guatemoc ordered the great horn to be sounded — the signal of the monarch that he permitted his troops no choice but victory or death. Echoings and re-echoings of this horn roused the warriors to terrific fury, and they threw themselves forward till they fairly ran upon our swords. If the Almighty had not lent us strength, we must have perished; without God's aid we should never have reached our quarters. Miserable we were, every one of us wounded, and the distress we were in was more terrible from our uncertainty as to what had happened to Cortes' and Sandoval's divisions. The cry of the Mexicans when they threw before us the five heads tied together by the hair and beards still rang in our ears.

Let us now turn to Sandoval, who was marching victoriously along the causeway his men had captured, when the Mexicans, stimulated by the defeat of Cortes, turned on him and his forces. And they turned so effectively that he had to begin a retreat. At this moment the enemy also cast among his men the bleeding heads of six of our fellow-soldiers from

Cortes' division, and shouted that those were the heads of Malinche, Alvarado and other officers, and what they had done with these they would do with Sandoval and his men. But the brave Sandoval was not daunted. He told his soldiers to begin an orderly retreat under cover of the sloops, musketeers and crossbowmen; and thus he came to his quarters.

But what had happened to Cortes? Sandoval, wounded and bandaged with rags, set off to learn. On his way warriors of Guatemoc, trying to cut off our communication, constantly harassed him, but at length he came up to Cortes, and when he saw him he cried, " Alas, my captain, how has this disaster befallen us? Is this the warfare you have taught?" Tears started to the eyes of Cortes as he said, " Oh, my son Sandoval, for my sins this has come upon us. But I deserve not all the blame. The royal treasurer, Juan de Alderete, did not obey my orders to fill in the gap where they defeated us. War the royal treasurer does not know; nor how to obey." Alderete was standing by when Cortes spoke these words, and he quickly threw back the guilt, maintaining that not he, but Cortes was to blame, for if he had ordered him to fill in the opening, he would have done so. Alderete also reproached Cortes for not ordering the allies off the causeway.

So the men stood exchanging angry words when the two sloops which Cortes had kept by the causeway came in. They had parried attacks from canoes, and after hard fighting, aided by a strong wind and the energy of their oars, had broken the stakes between which they were jammed, and, every man on board wounded, had returned. In all haste Cortes now despatched Sandoval to Tacuba to see how matters went with our division, sending Lugo with him. "Go, my son," said Cortes. "You see I am wounded and can not. Rescue the three divisions and inspire them with hope. Alvarado and his brothers have fought valiantly and defended themselves as gentlemen should, I well know, but I fear these hosts of dogs have overwhelmed them. How I fared you see."

Sandoval and Lugo found the Mexicans still storming our camp from that side the causeway where we had pulled down houses, and now they had driven one sloop between stakes and two of the soldiers in it lay dead and others wounded. When Sandoval saw me and six others standing waist deep in the water, he shouted, "Oh, brothers, put your strength to it and keep them from seizing the sloop"; and we then made such a drive that we soon hauled the boat to a safe place. Still many companies of Mexicans came nearer and struck at all of us, and gave Sandoval a blow with a stone in the face, till he ordered us to retreat little by little so they might not kill our horses. But we were slower than he thought we should be. " Are we then to perish through your selfishness? " he cried. " For heaven's, dear brothers, do fall back." The words were hardly out of his mouth before he and his horse were again wounded.

With excessive toil we at last gained our quarters, and Sandoval and Lugo stood telling Alvarado what had happened to the divisions, when the dismal drum of Huitzilopochtli, accompanied by the hellish music of shells, horns and things like trumpets, again sounded from the top of the temple. We all turned towards the lofty platform and there we saw the Mexicans carrying our companions by force up the steps. When they got them to the space in front of the chapel where the cursed idols stood, we saw them put plumes on their heads and mercilessly force them to dance before the idol, and after they had danced we saw them stretch them on their backs on stones and with stone knives cut open their breasts, tear out the palpitating heart and offer it to the idols. Alas! we saw all this! And then we saw how they seized the dead body by the legs, and threw it down the step, and Indian butchers waiting below severed arms, legs and heads from the bodies and drew the skin off the faces to tan with the beards on and keep for mockery and derision at their festivals.

While we were gazing at these abominable barbarities, and each saying to the other, " Thank God they are not carrying me to the sacrifice to-day!" fresh warriors fell suddenly on us, crying, "Look! That is the way you shall die. Our gods have promised"; while to the Tlaxcalans, throwing them roasted legs of their countrymen and arms of our soldiers from which the flesh had been torn, they shouted, "We are full of the flesh of the teules and your brothers. Take what is left on these bones. Go on helping the teules and we promise you shall be sacrificed with them."

After this celebration of their victory, Guatemoc sent to our Indian allies the heads of those horses they had killed, as well as feet and hands and bearded skins of our unhappy countrymen, with the message that one half of us were dead and he would soon have us all, and therefore the people must set aside their friendship for us and at once come to Mexico. Effects of this message were far-reaching, for about this time our allies of Tlaxcala, Texcoco and other towns by secret agreement with one another, and without a word to Cortes, Alvarado or Sandoval, suddenly left us and returned to their homes. A mere handful remained, who in our distress at the desertion said that their companions, seeing us all wounded and many of their own people dead, had at length come to believe the promise of the Mexican gods that we should all be destroyed, and had left us through fear.

Worn out by hardships and by bearing arms without nourishing food, the troops of all three divisions now rested several days and took mature counsel. But every day the Mexicans sounded their diabolical shell trumpets and yelled and howled, and every night fires lighted the platform of the great temple as they sacrificed our unfortunate comrades before their accursed idols. For ten successive days these indescribable barbarities went on — until all their prisoners were gone.

One morning many squadrons of warriors fell on us in endeavor to surround us on all sides, and in the midst of their fierce attack they were shouting such insults as these:—"You are a set of lying cowards!" "You are fit neither to build houses nor to plant maize!" "You are a pack of knaves and can only plunder towns!" "You have fled from your own country, but within eight days not one of you will be alive!" "What villains you are! Even your flesh is as bitter as gall and we can not eat it!" It seems they had feasted off the bodies of our comrades and the Lord, in his mercy, had turned the flesh bitter.

Among the Indian allies who had remained with us was a cacique of uncommon bravery, who finally said to our captain, "Malinche, why do you humble yourself every day to renew conflict with the Mexicans? Take my advice. Keep your sloops cruising round the town and cut off its supplies of water and provisions. Within the great city are so many thousands of warriors that their stores must soon be exhausted. The water they drink is from wells lately dug and is half salt, or it is from rain that falls. What can they do if you cut off their supplies? War against hunger and thirst is the worst war of all." This very advice many of us soldiers had already offered, but now, at the suggestion, Cortes threw his arms round the cacique and promised him the chieftaincy of towns.

By this time the men who managed our sloops stood no longer in fear of the stakes which the Mexicans had driven in the bed of the lake, for they had learned that with a stiffish breeze and vigorous rowing the boats were sure to break down the stakes. We therefore soon became masters of the lake and of many houses standing apart from the city. Twelve or thirteen days now passed, the Mexicans furiously fighting, our divisions capturing breastworks, bridges and openings and never ceasing to advance, our launches continually on the watch and daring to sail anywhere in the lake. And now, when time showed the threat of the Mexicans to destroy us within ten days an empty boast, the Texcocans despatched warriors to our aid and the Tlaxcalans and others followed with many men.

I am tired of writing about battles, but, as I said, I have been able to do no less, for during more than eighty days we were fighting all the time. We welcomed the days when it rained in the afternoon, for when heavy showers fell the enemy left us unmolested at night.

After we had by degrees gained so many advantages, had captured most of the bridges, causeways and entrenchments, had levelled so many houses and had fought our way to wells from which the Mexicans drew their drinking water, and had destroyed the springs, then Cortes ordered three Mexican caciques who were our prisoners to go to Guatemoc and offer terms of peace. At first the caciques refused, but at length induced by fair words and promises, they bore the message to their monarch, saying that Cortes had great affection for so near a relative of his friend, the great Montezuma, and he would indeed be sorely grieved if he were forced to destroy the great city of Mexico. He grieved, too, to see not only many people of the city itself but also of the country round about every day becoming victims of battles; therefore he offered peace in the name of his majesty, our king, who would pardon all the wrong they had done us. The monarch should remember that already, four several times, we had made this very offer, and through his youth and the bad advice of his papas and accursed idols, he had not accepted it, but had preferred war.

Arrived before Guatemoc, with tears and sighs the three messengers told what Cortes had said. Although the monarch was angry at the presumption of the message, he assembled his chiefs and the priests of the temple and told them he was inclined to make peace and end the war. Already, he said, the Mexicans had tried every mode of attack and every kind of defence, and yet when they thought us conquered we returned with new vigor. Just now, he continued, a great host of allies had joined us, every town had declared against Mexico, our sloops had broken down the stakes, and his people were threatened with want of both food and water. Therefore he begged each councillor fearlessly to give his opinion; especially the papas should give theirs and tell what the gods Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca had said and promised.

"Great and mighty monarch," the councillors in effect replied, "you are our master. You have shown great power of mind and deserve to be a monarch by right. Peace is an excellent thing. But reflect. From the moment these teules set foot in this country and in this city, our affairs have been growing worse. Call to mind the presents the great Montezuma gave them, the services he did them; what he received in return; what your relative caciques received. All the gold and silver of this great city have wasted away. Men and women at Tepeaca and other places have been marked on the face with a red-hot iron. Consider what the gods have promised. Put no trust in Malinche and his fine words. Better to die sword in hand in this city than to see ourselves slaves and tortured for gold."

To this speech the priests added at once that three nights in succession they had sacrificed to their gods, who had promised victory. "If you will have it," answered Guatemoc sorrowfully. "Make the most of the maize and other food, and we will die fighting. From this moment let no man be rash enough to ask for peace. Him I will kill with my own hand." After this the Mexicans arranged with people of other towns to bring water in canoes by night, and they dug wells in Mexico.

Cortes and all of us held from fighting two days, waiting for the answer of Guatemoc, when all of a sudden great masses of warriors fell on our camps with lionlike ferocity, and as if confident of defeating us. While they were making the attack the impelling horn of Guatemoc sounded, and then, in the mad fervor which it excited in them, they fairly ran upon the points of our lances and swords. "Why does Malinche go asking for peace?" they cried. "Our gods have promised us victory. We have plenty of food and water. Not one of you will leave here alive. Talk peace no more. Peace parley is for women; arms are for men." When they had said this they came at us verily like mad dogs. In such wise, for six or seven days in succession, our infuriated enemy fought. Great was the slaughter among them. And each time we remained master of the field.

To make events intelligible I must turn back and recall to the reader that Guatemoc, after the unfortunate day when we lost more than sixty men on the causeway, sent the feet and hands and skin of the faces of the murdered Spaniards to blazon his victory in certain towns and summon the towns' folks to help him. In answer to the call warriors put themselves in motion and went about ill-using some of the peoples friendly to us, plundering their farms and carrying off their children to kill for sacrifice. When Cortes received intelligence of these deeds he ordered Sandoval to the rescue. Much might be told of how in this expedition our troops suffered severe wounds and lacked all manner of refreshment, but nevertheless gained victories and speedily returned. But I will not detain the reader.

After this renewed glory of ours, Cortes again sent to Guatemoc begging him to make peace — saying he had not attacked the city, more than two thirds of which lay in ruins, or entered it for five days that it might not be wholly destroyed; and now that he offered sincere friendship the unhappy people had scarcely any food. The Mexicans' answer to this offer was in promptly sallying out and attacking our three camps with still greater fury, crying in their language as they struck hand to hand, "What will the king of Spain say to that? What will he say now?" and showering us with lances, arrows and stones till the missiles covered the ground.

Cortes now carried on the siege with more determination, and pushed forward into the city until we reached the great market place on which stood seven lofty temples. In a small temple on a little plaza not far off, we found some beams set upright and on them the heads of several of our companions; and the hair of the heads was much longer than when they were alive, which I certainly should not have believed if I had not seen it. Our hearts ached at the sight of our comrades' melancholy remains. We left them where they were, but twelve days later we took them with other Spanish heads offered before idols, and buried them in a church we founded, in this day called the Church of the Martyrs.

Several of our companies now made a most valiant attempt on the great temple of Huitzilopochtli. To take this elevated and strongly fortified building was a terrific labor. Priests who lived in great numbers in houses near the temple beat our men back, and were our particular assailants. They wounded us dreadfully, nevertheless we ascended the one hundred and fourteen steps, and capped our deed of arms by planting our standard on the top. When the flames we set to idols and chapel shot up from the summit of the building, Cortes was hotly engaged with the enemy in another quarter of town, but he heartily wished he were with us — they even said he was envious of our luck. But he could not come, for a good mile lay between him and us, and moreover, fierce attacks to overcome at many bridges and water openings.

Day after day passed without the Mexicans seeming inclined to sue for peace. We were all of us now fortified in the great market place to save the trouble of marching every morning from camps two miles off. But Cortes would not let us pull down any more houses or advance further into the city. In hopes of peace he forwarded still another message to Guatemoc begging him to surrender, promising that he should be respected and should continue to govern all his territory and cities. And Cortes sent the monarch such food as he had — maize cakes, fowls, prickly pears and cacao. Upon this Guatemoc took counsel with his caciques and they all agreed the answer should be, " Guatemoc wishes peace and at the end of three days will meet Cortes to settle terms." Four Mexican chiefs came to our camp with this reply. We really believed the promise true, and Cortes set forth plenty for them to eat and supplies to carry to their monarch — who returned the civility by sending two splendid mantles, with the assurance he would meet Cortes when things were ready. The message was a blind, however; Guatemoc never intended to come, and had parleyed for time in which to repair bridges, deepen canals and get fresh supplies of arms.

For us, when three days had passed, and the monarch did not appear, we concluded we had been fooled. The Mexicans, however, left us no time to vex ourselves with thought of the deceit, for they attacked us with such fierceness that we could hardly keep our ground.

CHAPTER XXI

How our conquest went on and we finally captured Guatemoc; and what famine did for the people of Mexico; Cortes' orders to repair Chapultepec water-pipes and rebuild houses; discontent about the treasure and its division; and why we went to settle in other provinces.

It was as if the war had just begun. Cortes now ordered us to advance to that neighborhood where Guatemoc had taken refuge — who, when he saw we were capturing the whole city, sent two chiefs to tell Cortes that he wished to speak with him, he standing on one bank of a canal, and our captain on the other. They agreed upon next morning for the interview. Cortes went to the spot, but no Guatemoc appeared; instead he sent caciques who said their monarch did not come, for he feared we would kill him with crossbows or muskets while they were talking. On his oath Cortes promised that Guatemoc should not be injured. In vain; "for what had happened to Montezuma might happen to him." While these caciques were talking they drew from a bag they had with them some maize cakes, cherries and the leg of a fowl, and seating themselves began to eat in a leisurely manner so that

Cortes might think they were not in want of provisions. To all this our captain answered that whether Guatemoc came or not was immaterial to him; he himself would soon pay their houses a visit to see how much maize and poultry they had.

For five days we made no attack; but many poor Indians, starving for lack of food, came to our camp every night. In this was the main reason Cortes ordered our attacks stayed — thinking they might make peace. But although we entreated them they would not. Cortes therefore commanded Sandoval with the twelve sloops to penetrate that part of the city where Guatemoc with the flower of his army had retreated. And at the same time he gave orders that our men should not wound or kill any Indians unless they should begin the attack — even if they should make an onset, our men were merely to defend themselves and not to do further harm. But houses our troops were to level to the ground and also to destroy the many defences the Mexicans had built on the lake. Cortes then mounted to the top of the temple to watch how the work went on.

Sandoval advanced the sloops with the ardor of a true soldier. Some time before this Guatemoc had ordered fifty large canoes always to stand ready, so that he might escape to the reed thickets and from there reach land and hiding in some friendly town, if he should find himself hard pressed in Mexico. So now, when he saw our troops coming and getting into the houses in which his caciques dwelt, he ordered put on board these canoes the gold, jewels and other property they could carry away, and he and his family took to flight. When Sandoval heard that Guatemoc had fled, he stayed the soldiers in their destruction of the houses and ordered Garcia Holguin, an intimate of his and master of a fast sloop manned by good rowers, to follow the monarch and take him, but without violence or injury.

Holguin flew in pursuit. It pleased God that he should overtake several canoes, and one that from the beauty of its workmanship and awnings and seat he knew must be the monarch's, and he signaled the boats to stop. But they would not, and so Holguin told his men to level crossbows and muskets at them; which, when Guatemoc saw he cried in fear, "Do not shoot. I am cacique of Mexico. I beg you not to touch my wife or my relatives, but carry me at once to Malinche." Greatly rejoiced, Holguin with much respect embraced the monarch and, spreading mats and cloths in the poop of his sloop, took the Mexican and his wife and thirty chiefs with him. But he touched nothing whatever in the canoe, but brought it in along with the sloop.

Cortes, who had stood on the summit of the temple, as I said, and watched Sandoval's movements, now heard the good news and straightway ordered a reception room prepared, as well as could be done with mats and cloaks and cushions, and a good meal also of such food as he himself had. Soon after Sandoval and Holguin arrived with the monarch and led him between them to our captain — who received him with the utmost respect and embraced him affectionately. But Guatemoc said, " Malinche, I have done my duty in defending my city. I can do no more. I am a prisoner before you, taken by a stronger force. Now draw the dagger you have in your belt and kill me "; and when he had spoken he wept and sobbed, and the caciques with him lamented loudly. But Cortes, through Donna Marina and Aguilar, answered in most kind manner that he esteemed him, the monarch, all the more for his courage and bravery in defending his city, and it was to his honor and not shame; what he, Cortes, could have wished, however, was that he had made peace of his own free will, and saved the razing of the city and the death of so many Mexicans. But now, since this had happened and could not be remedied, he should no longer grieve, but compose his spirit and remain master of Mexico and its provinces.

Guatemoc and his caciques thanked Cortes for this promise, and then our captain asked after the monarch's wife and the other ladies, wives of caciques, who had come with Guatemoc. Guatemoc said he had begged they might stay in the canoes until Malinche's pleasure be known. Cortes at once sent for them and had set before them the best of every food he had. And now, as it was late and beginning to rain, our captain told Sandoval to take the monarch and all his family and chiefs to a town near by; and he ordered Alvarado and Sandoval to withdraw each to his own quarters.

Thus were Guatemoc and his chiefs captured on the 13th of August, about the hour of vespers, in the year 1521. Praise and glory be to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to Our Lady, his blessed mother! Amen. The night of this day it thundered and lightened unceasingly, and up to midnight unusually heavy rain fell.

After Guatemoc's capture we soldiers turned so deaf we could scarcely hear. We were like those standing in a belfry where many bells are ringing and then all of a sudden cease. I suggest this as comparison, for during the more than eighty days we were besieging the city, both night and day, our ears suffered great confusion of noises. In one quarter some of the Mexicans were yelling and piping war-whoops to muster their squadrons; in another warriors were calling to the canoes to attack the sloops, the bridges, the causeways; still further one side others were urging bands with exciting turmoil to deepen the openings, drive piles, cut through dykes, throw up breastworks; still others were crying for more javelins and arrows, and again others shouting to women rounding stones for the slings — while from the chapels and towers of the idols the drums and shell trumpets dinned day and night, particularly the horrible, mournful sound of the accursed drum of Huitzilopochtli, whose tones pierced the very soul, never ceased for a moment. On the capture of Guatemoc all the uproar ended, and this is the reason of my likening our condition to those who have been standing in a belfry amid a clangor of bells.

I have read of the destruction of Jerusalem. I know not if there were greater carnage there. But this I know, that of the great number of warriors from the provinces who had crowded into the city of Mexico, most of them were slain. Land and lake were full of dead bodies, and the place became intolerable, and in this was the reason why, after we captured Guatemoc, the three divisions drew off to their former quarters and Cortes himself was ill from that which assailed his nostrils.

The atmosphere at last became so pestiferous that Guatemoc asked Cortes to permit all the inhabitants and the remainder of the Mexican forces to leave the city. Our captain promptly urged them to go, and for three days and nights an unending stream of men, women and children, so emaciated, dirty and death-like that it was pitiful to see them, crowded the causeways. As soon as they had got away Cortes set out to examine the city. We found houses full of dead bodies, and a few poor creatures still having life but too weak to stand. Every patch of earth in town looked as if it had been ploughed up, for the starving people had dug out every root and had peeled the bark off the trees to ease their hunger; and we found no fresh water. And yet, during all this horrible famine, the Mexicans had not eaten of the flesh of their own people, only that of ours and our Tlaxcalan allies.

After we had thus subdued this great and populous city, and had given thanks to God, and had made certain offerings, Cortes ordered a joyous feast to celebrate our conquest, and for it procured wine from Spain, out of a ship just come to Vera Cruz, and pigs brought him from Cuba. To this banquet Cortes bade all officers and soldiers whom he esteemed. But when we went, there were neither seats nor tables for one third of us, and disorder and ill-will prevailed. It would have been better if Cortes had not given that banquet, for at it many things happened in no wise worthy report. For some drank till they did foolish things, and they gambled and bragged of all the gold they had got. It would have been better if all the gold had been given for helpful purposes, and with thanks to God for the many benefits shown us.

The first service Cortes asked of Guatemoc was that the Mexicans at once repair the water-pipes leading from Chapultepec and supplying the city with fresh water. The next was that they clean the streets and all parts of the town of all remains of the dead, repair all the bridges and causeways, rebuild the houses and palaces we had pulled down, and after two months that they return and dwell in the city — Cortes marking out what part they were to live in and what part they were to leave for our use. For our own work our captain ordered a dock made to harbor our sloops, and a fort, also, and if I remember rightly he appointed Alvarado to take command of this till our king's officer should come from Spain.

We all agreed that the gold, silver, and jewels left in Mexico should be got together. There was little seemingly. Report went that four days before we captured him Guatemoc had thrown all the treasure in the lake. Then, too, the Tlaxcalans, and the rest of our Indian auxiliaries in the siege, besides those of our own number who went about in the sloops, had laid their hands on it. Still officers of the royal treasury declared that Guatemoc had hidden the greater part, and that Cortes was delighted and he would not say where it was concealed, for he would then be able to get hold of it himself; and that therefore, when these officers proposed to put Guatemoc and his cousin and intimate, the cacique of Tacuba, to the torture, Cortes was much pained at the bare thought of insulting so great a monarch, and that, too, for greed of gold. For their part, the stewards of Guatemoc alleged, they had no more than our king's officers already had in their possession — three and eighty thousand dollars, the whole of which had been cast into bars.

But we conquistadores were far from satisfied, and said the sum was much below the real amount; and some of us told the royal treasurer that Cortes' sole reason for not wanting Guatemoc and his officers tried by torture was that he might keep the gold himself. Our captain did not wish such a suspicion to lie at his door, and at last agreed to the torture. Thereupon the officers put Guatemoc to test, burning his feet with hot oil. They treated in the same way the cacique of Tacuba. What the two confessed under torture was that four days before Guatemoc was taken, they had thrown their gold, together with the cannon and muskets the Mexicans had captured on the night of our sorrows, and also when lately they had defeated Cortes on the causeway — that all they had thrown into the lake. Guatemoc pointed out the spot where he had thrown it, and good swimmers searched for the treasure. But they found nothing. When, however, we went with Guatemoc to the houses in which he had lived, and he took us to a stone reservoir of water, we fished up a sun of gold like the one Montezuma gave us, and besides many jewels and trinkets.

The cacique of Tacuba also told us that he had hidden rich things in gold in some houses twelve miles off, and if we would take him there he would tell us where he had buried them. So Alvarado and six soldiers went, and I was one. But when we came to the spot, the cacique said he had made up the story so as to be killed, and we were to kill him at once, for he had neither gold nor jewels. We went back without any treasure and there was no more casting of gold bars. It is undoubtedly true that little was left in the treasury of Montezuma when it came into the hands of Guatemoc, for Montezuma had taken the best for his offerings to us — which he had sent to our king.

I think there was some truth in what Guatemoc told about his having thrown gold and other things into the lake. By diving I and other soldiers proved this a fact. We were always able to bring up some piece of small value — which Cortes and the royal treasurer promptly demanded of us as gold belonging to his majesty. They themselves went with good divers to this spot, where they found ducks, dogs, pendants and small necklaces, a matter of say a hundred dollars. But the value was nothing to what report said the monarch had thrown into the lake.

Now our officers and men considered thoroughly when they saw how hardly worth accepting would be each man's share, and therefore Padre de Olmedo, Alvarado and others proposed to Cortes that the whole was so little, it should be divided among the maimed — the lame, the blind or one-eyed, the deaf, and those who had pains in their bodies or who had been burned by powder — that all the gold should be given to such, and the rest of us who were in comfortable health should agree that that was good use of it. After considerable thought, they proposed this to Cortes, believing they could induce him to add to the shares; for the suspicion was rife, as I said, that he had hidden away great part of Guatemoc's treasure. Cortes answered that he would try and satisfy us all. Officers and men then said they would like to know how much would be each allotment, and it was found that to every horseman eighty dollars, to a crossbowman, musketeer and shield-bearer, fifty or sixty dollars. None of the men would accept these pittances and they began to throw out bitter words against Cortes. The royal treasurer excused himself by answering he had done the best he could, for Cortes had taken for himself a portion equal to the king's, and had besides claimed repayment for the horses that had died; moreover, many pieces of gold had not gone into the heap; and finally over the whole matter we should faultfind with Cortes and not with him.

We were all deeply in debt. Some of us owed for crossbows, which could only be purchased for fifty or sixty dollars, and others for a sword at fifty. In the same way there were other cheatings, for all charges were exorbitant. A surgeon who called himself Maestre Juan charged heavy fees for curing some bad wounds. So also a quack who doctored us, and was also apothecary and barber.

Among the soldiers in the three camps, and also in the sloops, were friends and partisans of the governor of Cuba, Diego Velasquez, and also soldiers of Narvaez, who not only bore Cortes no good will, they hated him; and when these saw he did not give them the shares they had calculated for their lot, they asked, " How comes it that all the gold belongs to him who held it? "

Our captain was staying in a small town near Mexico, lodging in a palace, the walls of which had been so lately plastered and whitewashed that charcoal or ink stood out clear. And on these walls every morning satires or lampoons appeared. One day, for instance, you would find, " The sun, moon, stars, the sea and land, follow their fixed courses, and if they deviate from their courses, they return to their original elements: Cortes in his ambition and love of power should take this as a lesson"; "Cortes has mastered us in a worse defeat than we mastered Mexico, and we should not call ourselves the conquerors of New Spain, but the conquered of Hernando Cortes"; "A general's share does not satisfy him, but he must have a king's share, not counting the profits"; "How sad is my heart till Cortes gives back the gold he has hidden"; "Diego Velasquez spent his fortune to discover the north coast, and Cortes came and took the gain." There were others I can not repeat.

When of a morning he came from his quarters, Cortes did not pass these epigrams without reading them, and as the greater part were in handsomely turned verse, each sentence, it is evident from the homely versions given above, with a pointed meaning and reproof, and since our captain was a bit of a poet himself, he took it upon himself to write answers praising his deeds. But as days went on, and the couplets became more severe, Cortes wrote, "A blank wall is the paper of fools." Soon after was found added, "and of wise men and truth-tellers." Cortes knew who had written it, and he was angry and ordered that henceforth no one should dare stain the walls with malicious sayings.

Our captain, at last worn with unceasing fault-finding — that he had stolen all for himself — and weary also of the everlasting begging for loans and advance in pay, determined to get rid of the whole imbroglio by sending the most marked trouble-makers out to form settlements in those provinces which he thought eligible for settlement. He accordingly chose Sandoval to go to Tustepec, and form a colony there, and punish some Mexican garrisons for putting to death, about the time of our sorrowful retreat from Mexico, seventy-eight Spanish men and women, all of the company of Narvaez, who had attempted to form a settlement in a small town they called Medellin. Then Sandoval was to proceed to Coatzacoalcos to form a colony at its very harbor. Two other officers were to go out and conquer the province of Panuco, and others to form other colonies.

When the news spread throughout the provinces that Mexico had fallen, the governing caciques of these provinces could not believe it true, and they sent ambassadors to felicitate Cortes on his victories and to announce them as vassals of our king. But above all, the envoys were to see if it were really true that we had leveled to the ground the great city they had feared. Each of these ambassadors brought presents of gold, and many even brought their little children and showed them the ruins of Mexico, and explained it to them, just as we would point out to our children the spot where Troy stood.

I now answer a question that many interested readers have asked me: "Why did the true Conquistadores of the strong city of Mexico and of New Spain not settle down in Mexico? Why did they go to other provinces?" The reason is that we learned from tribute-books of Montezuma from what districts the greatest tribute of gold came, where there were mines, cacao, garments of cotton cloth. We were bent on going to those places from which we saw by the books and their accounts the people brought these chief tributes. And when we found even Sandoval, so notable an officer and such a friend of Cortes, starting out from Mexico, and when we considered that in the towns of the neighborhood of Mexico they had neither gold, nor mines, nor cotton, merely maize and maguey plantations, all the more did we seek to follow his, Sandoval's, example. We concluded that the country about the metropolis was poor, and so went off to settle in other provinces. And greatly were we deceived in our expectations.

This disappointment Cortes had foreseen. I remember when I went to ask him to give me leave to go with Sandoval, he said, "On my conscience, brother Bernal Diaz del Castillo, you are making a great mistake. I should like better your staying in Mexico with me. But if your choice is to go with your friend Sandoval, go. And God be with you. If I can I shall promote your welfare, but I am sure you will be sorry you left me."

Soon after we began our march.

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